

THE NUN.

By DIDEROT.

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VOLUME I.

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THE NUN.

THE answer of the Marquis of Croismare, if he returns me one, will furnish me with the first lines of this recital. Before I wrote to him, I wished to get a little acquainted with his character. He is a man of the world; he distinguished himself in the service; he is advanced in years; he has been married; he has a daughter and two sons, whom he loves, and to whom he is endeared. He is a person of birth, of intelligence, of spirit, of gaiety, of taste for the fine arts, and particularly for originality. He is praised to me for his sensibility, his honour, and his probity: and I find,

from all that I have heard, that I have not exposed myself by addressing him. But it is not to be presumed that he will take an interest in my fortunes without knowing who I am: and it is this circumstance which induces me to conquer my pride and my reluctance by undertaking these memoirs, in which I describe one part of my misfortunes without skill and without art, with the simplicity of a child of my age, and the frankness natural to my character. As my protector may require, or perhaps the whim may seize me to complete them, at a time when the facts shall have ceased to be present to my memory; I have thought that the catastrophe in which they terminate, and the profound impression which it has left upon my mind, and which will never be effaced as long as I live, will suffice to bring them accurately to my recollection.

My

My father was an advocate. He had married my mother when he was considerably advanced in life; he had three daughters by her. His fortune was more than adequate to settle them comfortably; but for this purpose it was necessary at least that his affection should be equally divided, and his deficiency in this respect I experienced to my cost. I certainly excelled my sisters in the endowments both of mind and person, and the superiority of my character and talents seemed to be the cause of much uneasiness to my parents. The advantages which nature and application had conferred upon me above my sisters becoming to me a source of endless chagrin; in order to be loved, endeared, fondled and indulged at all times as they were, I wished from my earliest years to exchange characters with them. If a person chanced to say to

my mother, You have charming children.... this was never understood as applicable to me. I was sometimes avenged of this injustice ; but the praise which I received always cost me so dear when we were alone, that I would much rather have been wronged : the more that strangers shewed a preference for me, the more ill-nature I had to submit to when they were gone. O how often have I lamented not having been born ugly, stupid, silly, proud, in a word, with all those cross-grained qualities which recommended them to my parents ! I would ask myself, whence can proceed this caprice in a father, in a mother, in other respects virtuous, just and pious ? Shall I confess it to you, Sir ? Some expressions which escaped from my father in his anger (for he was very passionate), some circumstances which I have collected at different

different times, some hints of the neighbours, some whisperings of the servants, have led me to suspect a reason which excused them a little. Perhaps my father had some doubt respecting my birth; perhaps I recalled to my mother a fault which she had committed, or the ingratitude of a man whom she had loved too well: how can I tell? But though all these suppositions be erroneous, what harm is there in communicating them to you? You will burn the letter, and I promise to burn your answers. As there were but short intervals between our coming into the world, we all three grew up together. We had some suitors. My eldest sister was courted by a charming young man. I soon perceived that he took particular notice of me, and that I was becoming the object of his assiduities. I felt that this preference would soon draw

upon me a great deal of ill will, and I told my mother of it. It is perhaps the only thing in my life that ever I did with which she was pleased ; and this was the way she took to reward me for it. Four days after, or at least in a few days, she informed me that they had determined to send me to a convent ; and on the next morning I was conducted thither. My situation was so uncomfortable at home, that this event gave me very little uneasiness, and I repaired to Saint Mary's, which was my first convent, with a great deal of cheerfulness. In the mean while my sister's galant, not seeing me, forgot me, and became her husband. His name is Mr. R*** : he is a notary, and lives at Corbeil, where they make the most unhappy couple in the world. My second sister was married to a Mr. Bauchon, a silk-mercier in Quincampoix Street,

Street, at Paris, and lives with him pretty comfortably.

My two sisters being settled, I supposed that they would think of me, and that I should get out of the convent. I was then sixteen and a half years of age. They had given considerable portions to my sisters; I promised myself a fortune equal to theirs, and my head was filled with flattering schemes, when I was summoned to the parlour. It was Father Seraphin, my mother's director; he had been mine also, so that he had no difficulty in explaining to me the motive of his visit: his object was to make me assume the habit of a nun. I remonstrated against this strange proposition, and plainly declared to him that I had no taste for the Convent. So much the worse, said he to me, for your parents have so exhausted their means upon

your sisters, that I cannot see what they can do for you in the narrow circumstances to which they are reduced. Consider, Mademoiselle, you must either enter for ever into this house, or go to some country convent, where they will receive you for a moderate salary, and from which you can only depart at the death of your parents, an event for which you may have to wait a long time. . . . I complained bitterly, and shed a flood of tears. The Superior was informed of it, and waited my return from the parlour. I was in a confusion seemingly unaccountable. She said to me, And what's the matter with you, my dear child ? (she knew better than I did what was the matter.) How you look ! But I never saw any distress equal to yours ; you make me tremble. Is it because you have lost your father or mother ?— I once thought of throwing myself

myself into her arms and saying, Would to God ! I contented myself with replying, I have neither father nor mother ; I am an unfortunate wretch whom they have forgotten, and whom they wish to entomb alive.—She let the storm pass over, and waited for the moment of returning tranquillity. I explained to her more clearly what had just been announced to me. She seemed to have pity on me ; she embraced me, she encouraged me not to enter into a state for which I had no relish ; she promised to entreat, to remonstrate, and to solicit in my behalf. O Sir ! how these Superiors are enveloped in artifice ! you have no idea of them. In fact she wrote. She well knew the answers which they would make her ; she communicated them to me : it was a considerable time before I began to doubt her sincerity. In the mean time
the

the period which they had fixed for my declaring my resolution, arrived; she came and informed me of it with the most studied appearance of concern. At first she stopped without speaking, she then uttered a few accents of sorrow; after which I discovered the rest. This was still a distressing scene; I shall have few of a different kind to describe to you. The art of containing themselves is that in which of all others they most excel. She then said to me (in truth I believe she was crying at the time): Alas! then, my child, you are going to leave us! my dear child, we shall never see you more! and other ejaculations which I did not hear. I threw myself down upon a chair; I was silent, I cried, I was motionless; I rose and walked about, sometimes leaning against the walls, at other times pouring forth my grief into her bosom.

Conceive

Conceive what I felt when she added :
But might not you do one thing ? Consider, but don't you go to say that I advised you ; you can keep a secret : I would not for all the world that there was any reproach upon my character. What is it that they desire of you ? that you take the veil ? Well ! why not take it ? What engagement does this lay you under ? None ; to stay two years longer with us. We don't know who may die in the course of that time, or who may live it out : two years is a considerable period ; some fortunate circumstances may intervene before the end of two years. She accompanied this insidious proposal with so many caresses, so many protestations of friendship, so many insinuating falsehoods ! I knew where I was, I did not know where they might put me, and I suffered myself to be persuaded.

ded. She wrote then to my father ; her letter was very well : oh ! for this purpose it could not have been better : my anxiety, my grief, my remonstrances, were not dissembled ; I assure you that a girl of greater penetration than I was would have been deceived by it. In the mean while the matter was concluded by my giving my consent. With what expedition every thing was prepared ! the day was fixed, my dress was made up, the moment of the ceremony arrived without a moment's interval. I forgot to tell you, that I saw my father and mother, that I tried every expedient to touch their feelings, and that I found them inflexible. It was a M. Abbé Blin, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, who exhorted me, and M. the Bishop of Alep, who gave me the dress. This ceremony was not gay of itself ; the day on which it was performed was one of the
most

most sorrowful: though the nuns thronged round to support me, twenty times I felt my knees shake, and was like to fall upon the steps of the altar. I heard nothing, I saw nothing, I was stupid; they carried me, and I went; they interrogated me, and they answered the questions for me. At length this cruel ceremony was concluded; all the strangers withdrew, and I remained among the flock to which I had just been united. My companions came round me; they embraced me, and said: But look at my sister, how handsome she is! how this black veil relieves the paleness of her complexion! how well this bandeau becomes her! how it rounds her face! how it extends her cheeks! how this habit displays her waist and her arms! I listened to them with pain, I was distressed: at the time I found it necessary to agree with them; when I

was alone in my cell, I remembered their flatteries, and could not refrain from putting them to the test in my little mirror, but I thought them not altogether false. There were some honours attached to this day ; they increased them on my account. I paid little attention to them ; but they affected to think and say the contrary, though it was clear they had no reason. At night, on coming out from prayers, the Superior repaired to my cell. Troth, said she after a little consideration, I know not why you expressed so much reluctance to assume this dress ; it makes you a wonder, you are quite charming ; Sister Susan is a very pretty Nun : we shall love you the better for that. Here, let us see you walk. . . . You don't keep yourself upright enough, it is not necessary that you stoop. . . . She set right my head, feet, hands, waist, and arms,
it

it was almost as good as a lesson of Marcelle upon the monastic graces, for every condition has its own. She then sat down, and said to me : It is very well ; but let us now talk a little seriously. Before the lapse of two years your parents may have altered their resolution ; and even you yourself may wish to remain here when they wish to take you away ; this is not impossible.—Madam, don't believe it.—You have been a long time amongst us, but you are still unacquainted with our mode of life ; it certainly has its pains, but it also has its pleasures.... You doubt the truth of every thing I say of the world and of the cloister, but every condition bears the same inscription ; for I thank God ! they made me read all the monks have said of their state, which they know well, and which they detest ; and of the world, which they
Love,

love, against which they rail, but with which they are unacquainted.

I shall not enter into a long detail respecting my noviciate : if it were a fair specimen of the austerity of the convent, one could not have so much objection to it, but it is the most pleasant period of the monastic life. A mother of novices is the most indulgent sister that they can find. She makes it her study to divest the condition of every thing that is unpleasant : it is a course of the most artful and refined seduction. She thickens the surrounding darkness, she lulls you into tranquillity, she decoys you into her snares, she fascinates you. Ours was particularly attached to me. I do not believe that any young soul without experience could be proof against this fatal art. The world has its precipices, but I don't imagine that the descent to them is so easy. If I had a cold, my
presence

presence was dispensed with at service, at penance, and at prayers ; I went early to bed, I rose late, I was exempted from discipline. Conceive, Sir, that there were some days in which I would have sighed for the moment of sacrificing myself. There are no distressing occurrences which pass in the world of which they do not speak to you ; they arrange facts, they fabricate stories, and then it is praises without end, and the operation of the grace of God, which prevent you from incurring these humiliating disgraces. In the mean while, the period drew near which I had sometimes hastened by my wishes. Then I awaked from my dream ; I felt my reluctance return with increased strength. I went to inform the superior, or the mother of our novices. These women take ample vengeance for the trouble you occasion

them; for it is not to be thought that they have any amusement in the hypocritical part which they act, as from the foolish things which they are under the necessity of so often repeating to you, the task becomes in the end stale and disgusting to them; but they undertake it for the sake of bringing a thousand crowns into their house. This is the important object for which they lead a life of deceit, and prepare forty or fifty years of despair, and perhaps eternal misery for young innocents; for it is certain, that of every hundred nuns who die before they reach the age of fifty, there are fifty damned, exclusive of those who become foolish, stupid, or mad in the prospect.

One day, a nun of the last description happened to escape from the cell in which she was confined. I saw her. This, Sir, is the moment in which

my good or bad fortune must be irrevocably fixed, according as you act by me. I never saw any thing so frightful. Her hair was dishevelled, and her body almost naked; she dragged iron chains; her eyes were wild, she tore her hair, she beat her breast with her fists; she ran, she roared; she imprecated upon herself and others the most dreadful curses; she wanted to throw herself out at a window. Terror seized me, I trembled at every joint, I saw my fate in that of this unfortunate wretch, and I immediately resolved in my mind to die a thousand times rather than to encounter it. They perceived the effect which this incident would have upon my spirits, and they endeavoured to prevent it. They told me I know not how many absurd and contradictory stories about this nun: that her intellects were deranged before she

came to the house ; that she had had a terrible fright at a critical time ; that she had become subject to visions ; that she thought she held intercourse with angels ; that some preachers of an extravagant morality had so terrified her about the judgments of God, that her disordered brain had been turned by the description ; that she saw nothing but demons, hell, and gulphs of fire ; that they had been very unlucky ; that it was a thing quite unheard of before in their house, and I know not what. This made no impression upon me. Every moment the mad nun recurred to my mind, and I renewed the oath of never taking a vow.

The period arrived at which it became necessary for me to show whether I could keep my word. One morning after service, the Superior entered my cell. She held a letter in her hand.

Her

Her looks were sorrowful and dejected. Her arms sunk ; it seemed as if she had not power to lift up the letter ; she looked at me ; tears stood in her eyes ; we were both silent ; she waited till I should speak ; I was tempted to begin first, but I contained myself. She asked me how I did ; she observed that service had been very long to-day ; that I had a little cough ; that I appeared to be indisposed. To all this I answered—No, my dear mother. She still kept the letter in her hand, which was hanging down ; while she was putting these questions, she put it upon her knee, and her hand in part concealed it ; at last, after having put some questions respecting my father and mother, finding that I did not ask what this paper was, she said, Here is a letter..... When she uttered this word, I felt my heart quake, and I added in

a trembling voice: Is it from my mother?—It is; take and read it...—I recovered myself a little; I took the letter; I read it at first with tolerable firmness; but as I advanced, terror, indignation, resentment, contempt, succeeding one another in my breast, I displayed different tones, different voices, and different motions. Sometimes I scarcely held the paper, at other times I held it as if I meant to tear it, and at other times I grasped it with violence as if I had been tempted to twist it in my hand and throw it away.—Alas! my child, what answer shall we make to this?—Madam, you know best.—No, I do not know. The times are unfortunate, your family has sustained some losses; your sister's affairs are embarrassed; they both have a number of children; your parents impoverished themselves by marrying them, they are ruining themselves

themselves in order to support them. It is impossible that they can make any permanent settlement upon you ; you have assumed the habit, they have been at some expence ; by taking this step you have made them conceive some hopes ; they have announced to their acquaintances, that you are immediately about to commence the profession. At all events, you may depend upon every assistance which I can give you. I have never enticed any person into a convent ; it is a state into which we are conducted by the voice of God, and it is extremely dangerous to blend our voice with his. I shall never attempt to speak to your heart, if grace is silent ; hitherto I never have had to reproach myself with the misfortunes of any person, and I should not wish to begin with you, my child, you who are so dear to me. I have not forgotten

that it was at my persuasion that you took the first steps, and I will not suffer them to take advantage of this to bring you into engagements contrary to your inclination. Let us consider then together, let us concert. Do you wish to make profession?—No, Madam.—You have no relish for the religious state?—No, Madam.—You will not obey your parents?—No, Madam.—What do you wish to be then?—Anything but a nun. I do not wish to be one, I will not be one.—Well, you shall not be one. Let us deliberate and draw up an answer to your mother....—We agreed in some ideas. She wrote, and showed me the answer, which seemed to be very proper. In the mean time, they sent the director of the house to me; they sent me the doctor who had pronounced the discourse in my praise when I assumed the habit; they recommended me

me to the mother of the novices; I saw M. the Bishop of Alep; I had to enter the lists with some pious women whom I did not know, but who took an interest in my affairs; I had continual conferences with monks and priests; my father came, my sisters wrote to me; at last my mother appeared: I resisted them all. In the mean while, the day was fixed for my profession: they omitted nothing to obtain my consent; but when they saw that all their solicitations were to no purpose, they resolved to proceed without it.

They shut me up in my cell, they imposed silence upon me; I was separated from all the world, abandoned to myself; and I saw that they were determined to dispose of me without consulting me any farther. I did not wish to take the vows, it was a settled point with me; and all the false or real terrors which

which they inflicted upon me, did not shake my purpose. In the mean time I was in a most deplorable state, I did not know how long it might last; and if it ceased, I knew still less what was to become of me. Amid these uncertainties, I adopted a plan of conduct of which you will form whatever judgment, Sir, you please. I saw no person, neither the superior, nor the mother of the novices, nor my companions. I sent notice to the first, pretending to be reconciled to the will of my parents; but my design was to put an end to this persecution, by rendering it notorious, and publicly to protest against the violent measures which they had in contemplation. I said that she was mistress of my fortune, that she might dispose of it according to her wishes, that she might require of me to take the vows, and I should do it.

Conceive

Conceive the joy which was diffused through the whole house, the caresses renewed with every species of flattery and seduction. “God had spoken to
“ my heart, there was no person fitter
“ than I for the state of perfection.
“ It was impossible for this not to hap-
“ pen, they had always expected it,
“ Those did not discharge their duty
“ with so much profit and constancy
“ who were not really called. The
“ mother of the novices had never seen,
“ in any of her pupils, a call so truly
“ characteristic ; she was quite sur-
“ prised at the cross fit that I had
“ taken, but she had always told our
“ mother superior to persevere, and
“ that it would pass over ; that the best
“ nuns had moments of a similar kind,
“ that they proceeded from suggestions
“ of the evil spirit, who always re-
“ doubled his efforts when he was on
the

“ the point of losing his prey ; that I
“ was about to make my escape from
“ him ; that my path henceforth would
“ be strewed with roses ; that the re-
“ straints of the religious life would
“ appear to me to be the more support-
“ able, because I had greatly exag-
“ gerated them ; that this sudden pres-
“ sure of the yoke was a favour of
“ heaven, for the purpose of after-
“ wards lightening it.....” It appeared
to me rather singular that the same
thing should proceed from God and
the Devil, according as they might
think proper to view it. There are
many circumstances similar to this
which occur in the convent ; and I have
often been told, by way of consolation
by some, that my thoughts were the
instigations of Satan, and by others,
that they were the inspirations of God.
The same evil proceeds from God by
whom

whom we are tried, and from the Devil by whom we are tempted.

I conducted myself with prudence. I thought I could answer for myself. I saw my father, he spoke to me coldly; I saw my mother, she embraced me; I received letters of congratulation from my sisters, and a great many others. I knew that it would be a M. Sornen, Vicar of Saint-Roch, who would preach the sermon, and M. Thierry, Chancellor of the University, who would receive my vows. Every thing went on well till the evening before the important day; only after being informed that the ceremony would be private, that there would be few people there, and that the church-door would be open only to my parents, I invited, by means of the maid of the turning-box, every person in the neighbourhood, my male and female friends; I had permission

mission to write to some of my acquaintances. All this company, whom they did not expect, presented themselves; it was necessary to permit them to come in, and the assembly was almost as numerous as my plan required. O Sir! what a dreadful night the preceding was to me! I did not lie down. I sat upon my bed, I raised my hands to heaven, and called God to witness the violence which they were going to offer me. I represented to myself the part which I was to act at the foot of the altar—a young girl loudly protesting against an action to which she seemed to have consented; the scandal of the by-standers, the distress of the nuns, the fury of my parents. O God! what is to become of me?..... While I was pronouncing these words I was seized with a general faintness, I fell in a swoon upon my
bolster;

bolster; a general coldness, in which my knees shook, and my teeth chattered, succeeded the swoon, and this coldness was followed by a burning heat. My mind was troubled. I do not remember undressing myself, nor going out of my cell; but I was found naked to my shift, stretched upon the ground at the door of my Superior, motionless, and almost dead. I have learned these things since. In the morning I found myself in my cell with the Superior, the mother of the novices, and some of those whom they call assistants, round my bed. I was very much distressed. They put some questions to me; they saw from my answers that I had no knowledge of what had passed, and they did not tell me of it. They asked me how I did, if I persisted in my holy resolution, and if I found myself
in

in a condition to support the fatigue of the day. I answered in the affirmative, and, contrary to their expectation, no derangement of the plan took place.

Every thing had been arranged on the preceding evening. They rung the bells to let the world know that they were about to add another to the list of the unfortunate. They came to dress me ; it was a toilette day. Now, when I recollect all these ceremonies, there seems to be in them something solemn and affecting for a young innocent, whose inclination is not averse to them. They conducted me to the church, they performed high mass. The good Vicar, who gave me credit for a resignation which I did not possess, preached a long sermon, which was every word inapplicable to me : there was something very ridiculous in what he said of my happiness, my
grace,

grace, my courage, my zeal, my fervour, and all those fine sentiments which he supposed that I felt. In the mean while, the contrast between this eulogium and the step which I was about to take, troubled me; I was staggered for a few moments, but my uncertainty did not last long. It only taught me better than I had learnt before, that I was deficient in those qualities which are necessary to constitute a good nun. At last the dreadful moment arrived. When it was necessary for me to enter the place, where I was to take my vows, I could not walk; two of my companions took me by the arms, and, with my head leaning upon one of them, they dragged me along. I knew not what passed in the hearts of the bye-standers; but at the sight of a young victim carried dying to the altar, on all sides sighs and sobbings burst

forth, among which, I am sure, those of my father and mother were not heard. The assembly rose up : there were some young persons mounted upon the chairs, and hanging by the bars of the railing ; a profound silence was observed, and the priest who presided at my profession said to me : Maria-Susannah Simonin, do you promise to tell the truth ?—I promise.—Do you come here of your own accord, with good will ? I answered, No ; but those who accompanied me answered, Yes. — Maria-Susannah Simonin, do you promise to God, chastity, poverty, and obedience ?—I hesitated a moment, the priest waited, and I replied, No, Sir.—He repeated : Maria-Susannah Simonin, do you promise to God, chastity, poverty, and obedience ? I replied in a firmer tone : No, Sir, no.—He stopped, and said to me : Recollect yourself, my child, and
listen

listen to me.—Sir, said I to him, you ask me if I promise to God, chastity, poverty, and obedience? I understood you perfectly, and I answered you no.... And turning round to the bystanders, among whom considerable murmuring had arisen, I made a sign that I wished to speak; the murmurs ceased, and I said: “Sirs, and you in particular, my father and mother, I take you all to witness.....” When I uttered these words, one of the sisters let fall the veil over the railing, and I saw that it was to no purpose to speak. The nuns surrounded me, and loaded me with reproaches; I heard them without saying a word. They conducted me to my cell, where they locked me in.

Being left alone to my reflections, I began to take courage and to consider my conduct, of which I did not repent.

I saw that, after the notoriety which I had occasioned, it was impossible I could long remain here, and that perhaps they would not dare to take me back into the convent. I did not know what they intended to do with me, but I was sensible there was nothing worse than for one to become a nun contrary to inclination. I lived in confinement without hearing a single word from any person. Those who brought me my victuals, came in, put my dinner down upon the floor, and went away without speaking. In about a month they brought me a secular habit, when I put off that of the house; the Superior came, and told me to follow her. I followed her to the door of the convent, where I went into a carriage; I there found my mother alone, waiting for me; I sat down before her, and the carriage set off. We continued opposite one another

another for some time, without saying a word : I kept my eyes downward, and did not presume to look her in the face. I know not what passed in my mind, but all on a sudden I threw myself at her feet, and leaned my head upon her knees : I said nothing, but sobbed till I was almost stifled. She repelled me harshly without speaking. I did not rise ; the blood sprang from my nose ; I seized one of her hands in spite of her, and bathing it with a stream of blood and tears, putting my mouth upon her hand, I kissed it, and said to her : You are still my mother, I am still your child. . . . She answered me, pushing me from her with greater violence, and tearing her hand from between mine at the same time : Rise, wretch, rise.— I obeyed her, I rose up, and drew my hood over my face. She had assumed such an air of authority and sternness,

that I dared not look at her. My tears, and the blood which flowed from my nose mingling together, ran down my arms till I was all besmeared before I was aware of it. From some words that she dropt, I conceived that her robe and linen were stained with it, and that this offended her. We arrived at the house, where I was conducted to a small room which was prepared for me. I threw myself down upon my knees on the stair-case: I held by her clothes; but all that I could obtain from her was a contemptuous cast of the head, with an expression of indignation from her mouth and eyes, which you can conceive better than I can describe.

I entered my new prison, where I passed six months, soliciting in vain the favour of speaking to her, of seeing my father, or of writing to them: I was served with provisions and attended:

a domestic accompanied me to mass on holy days, and locked me up. I read, I worked, I wept, I sung, and in this manner did I pass my days. A secret sentiment supported me, and it was the consciousness that I was free, and that my lot, cruel as it was, might change. But it was decided that I was to be a Nun, and I was one.

So much inhumanity, so much obstinacy on the part of my parents, completely confirmed the suspicion I had entertained respecting my birth. I could never find any other principles on which they could be excused. My mother seemed to fear lest I should one day object to the mode in which they had divided their property, lest I should demand my legitim, and associate a natural child with legitimate offspring. But what was only conjecture, is in time to be realized.

While I was confined in the house, I performed few exterior exercises of religion, yet I was always sent to confession on the eve of great holidays ; I have mentioned that I had the same director as my mother. I conversed with him, I explained all the rigour of treatment which I had experienced from my parents for about three years. He was acquainted with it all. I complained particularly of my mother with bitterness and resentment. This priest had entered late into the religious state; he was humane. He heard me with tranquillity, and said to me : My child, pity your mother, pity still more than you blame her. Her heart is good ; be assured that it is against her will that she acts in this manner,—Against her will, Sir ! and who can constrain her to observe this conduct ? Did she not give me birth ? and what difference is there

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there

there between my sisters and me?—
A great deal!—I don't understand the
meaning of your answer. I was
proceeding in a comparison between my
sisters and me, when he stopped me
and said: Go, go, inhumanity is not
the vice of your parents; endeavour
to bear your lot with patience, and at
least to make it a merit before God.
I will see your mother, and be assured
that to serve you, I will use all the
ascendancy which I possess over her
mind. That *great deal* which he
had mentioned, was a ray of light.
I no longer doubted the truth of what
I had thought concerning my birth.
The Saturday following, about half
past five in the evening, when day was
almost gone, the servant girl who was
employed to serve me, came up stairs
and said: Madam, your mother says
that you must dress. . . . An hour after:
Madam

Madam says that you must go down stairs with me. At the door I found a coach, which the servant and I entered, and I learnt that we were going to the Feuillans, to Father Seraphin. He expected us, he was alone. The domestic retired, and I entered the parlour. I sat down, uneasy and curious to hear what he had to tell me. He spoke to me as follows : The severe conduct of your parents is about to be explained to you ; I have obtained your mother's permission. You are discreet ; you have spirit and firmness ; you are of an age when you might even be entrusted with a secret, in which you were not yourself concerned. It is a long while since I first advised your mother to reveal to you that with which you are to be made acquainted ; but she could never summon resolution for the task,

task. It is hard for a mother to confess to a child a serious fault ; you know her character ; it does not consist with that species of humiliation which a certain avowal would involve. She imagined that without this resource she would be able to bring you to her views ; she has been mistaken ; the circumstance has grieved her. She now recurs to my advice, and she herself has given me orders to announce to you, that you are not the daughter of M. Simonin.—I instantly replied, I had suspected it.—Consider now, Mademoiselle, observe, weigh, judge whether your mother could without the consent, or even with the consent of your father, place you upon an equal footing with children whose sister you are not ; if she could confess to your father a fact of which already he entertains but too much suspicion.—But Sir, who is my father ?—Mademoiselle, that

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is a point with which I have not been entrusted. It is too certain, Mademoiselle, continued he, that your sisters have obtained prodigious pecuniary advantages over you, and that every imaginable precaution has been taken by marriage contracts, by the dilapidation of their property, by stipulations, by trust deeds, and other methods, to reduce your legitim to nothing, in case you should one day appeal to the laws to make it effectual. If you lose your parents, you will gain little by the event. You refuse a convent; perhaps you will regret that you are not there.—That is impossible, Sir, I ask nothing.—You do not yet know hardships, labour, indigence.—I know at least the value of liberty, and the importance of a situation which we are not called to embrace.—I have told you what I had to communicate: it belongs to you, Mademoiselle, to make
your

your reflections. He then rose—Sir, yet one question more.—As many as you please.—Are my sisters acquainted with what you have told me?—No, Mademoiselle.—How then could they have brought themselves to the resolution of plundering their sister? for such they consider me.—Ah, Mademoiselle, interest! interest! they could not otherwise have obtained the considerable marriages they have found. In the world all consider themselves only, and I advise you not to reckon upon them if you lose your parents. Be assured they will dispute to a farthing the little portion to be shared among you. They have a number of children. This pretext will be sufficiently plausible to reduce you to beggary. Besides, it is no longer in their power to do any thing; every thing is conducted by their husbands. Although they might enter-
tain

tain some sentiments of commiseration, the supplies they might afford you without the knowledge of their husbands, would prove a source of domestic divisions. I can only see two alternatives, that even legitimate children are to be abandoned, or children to be supplied at the expense of domestic peace. The bread of charity too, Mademoiselle, is very unpalatable. If you trust to my advice, you will reconcile yourself to your parents ; you will do what your mother has a right to expect from you ; you will enter a convent ; a small pension will be settled upon you, with which you will pass your days, if not happily, at least tolerably. In short, I will not conceal from you that the apparent state of desertion in which you are left by your mother, her obstinacy in confining you in a convent, and some other circumstances

stances which at present I do not recollect, though I knew them at the time, have produced upon your father the very same effect as upon you. He had entertained suspicions of your birth, but it is suspicion no longer; and without being acquainted with the secret, he has no doubt that you only belong to him as a child by the law, which ascribes them to the person who bears the name of husband. Go, Mademoiselle, you are virtuous and considerate, reflect upon what you have now heard.

I rose, and burst into tears. I saw that the Father himself was softened: he mildly raised his eyes to heaven, and led me back. I rejoined the domestic who had accompanied me; we entered the carriage, and returned to the house. It was late. I mused for a part of the night upon the secret which had been revealed to me; I continued to think
upon

upon it in the course of the next day. I had no father; scruples had deprived me of a mother; precautions were taken to defeat my claim to the rights of my legal birth; I was in a rigid domestic captivity, without hope, without resource. Perhaps if this explanation had been sooner made, after my sisters were settled, had they kept me in the house which continued to be frequented, some one might have been found to whom my character, my spirit, my figure, my talents, would have appeared a sufficient dowry. The thing was not yet impossible, but the noise I had excited in the convent, rendered it more unlikely. It was not easy to be conceived that a girl of between seventeen and eighteen years of age could proceed to such extremities without a firmness very uncommon. Men are loud in their praises of this quality, but I think they willingly dispense with it in those whom they intend to espouse.

espouse. This, however, was a resource to be attempted before any other alternative was embraced. I adopted that of disclosing my sentiments to my mother, and I requested a conversation with her, which was granted.

It was in winter. She was seated in an arm chair before the fire ; her countenance was stern; her eye fixed, and her features unmoved. I approached her, I threw myself at her feet, and I asked pardon for all the faults I had committed. It is by what you are now to tell me, answered she, that you must deserve it. Rise ; your father's absence gives you an opportunity to explain yourself. You have seen Father Seraphin; you now know who you are, and what you may expect from me, if your design is not to punish me the whole of my life for a fault which I have already but too dearly expiated. Well then, Made-

moiselle, what do you wish me to do? What have you resolved?—Mamma, replied I, know that I have nothing, and that I ought to pretend to nothing. I am very far from being disposed to add to your sufferings, of whatever nature they may be. Perhaps you would have found me more submissive to your will, had you informed me sooner of certain circumstances which it was difficult for me to suspect; but now I know them; I have learnt who I am, and it only remains for me to conduct myself suitably to my situation. I am no longer surprised at the distinctions which have been made between my sisters and me; I am sensible of their justice, and I subscribe to it; but still I am your child; you have carried me in your bosom, and I hope you will never forget that endearing circumstance.—May I perish, added she with emotion, if I have not acknowledged

known to you as much as it was in my power !—Alas, Madam, said I, bestow upon me your kindness, give me your countenance, restore me the tenderness of him who thinks himself my father.---He is almost as certain of your birth, replied she, as you and I. I never see you beside him without enduring his reproaches ; he directs them against me by the severity with which he treats you : do not expect from him the sentiments of a tender father. And, may I acknowledge it to you ? you remind me of a treachery, an ingratitude, so odious on the part of another, that the idea of him is insupportable. This man constantly steps in between you and me, he repels me, and the hatred I owe to him lights upon you.—What ? said I, must I not hope that you and M. Simonin will treat me even as a stranger, as one unknown, whom huma-

nity might have induced you to shelter? —Neither of us can do it. Do not any longer, my daughter, poison the enjoyment of my life. If you had no sisters, I know what I should do; but you have two, and they have numerous families. The passion by which I was long supported is extinguished, conscience has resumed its right.... But he, to whom I owe my life.... he is no more, he is dead without remembering you, and that is the least of his crimes..... Here her figure changed; her eyes flamed, indignation overspread her countenance; she attempted to speak, but she could not articulate, the trembling of her lips would not permit her. She was seated; she leaned her head upon her hands, to conceal from me the violent emotions that passed within her breast. She remained some time in this situation. She then rose; she took two or three turns through the
room

room without saying a word ; she would have wept, but her tears refused to flow; and she said : Monster ! it was not his fault that you were not smothered in my womb, by the sufferings he cost me ; but God has preserved us both, that the mother might expiate her error in the person of the child. My daughter you have nothing, and you ever will have nothing. The little I can do for you I conceal from your sisters ; such are the consequences of a weakness. Yet I hope to have nothing with which to reproach myself at my death ; I shall have gained your dowry by my economy. I do not abuse the goodness of my husband, but every day I set apart what I occasionally receive from his liberality. I have sold all the jewels I possessed, and he has allowed me to dispose of the produce as I think proper. I loved
E 3 play,

play, I now play no more. I was fond of spectacles, I have deprived myself of this pleasure. I was fond of company, I live retired. I loved splendour, and that too I have renounced. If you take the vows according to my wish, and that of M. Simonin, your dowry will be the fruit of my daily retrenchments.—But, Madam, said I, this house is still visited by men of property; perhaps there may be found among them, one who, satisfied with my person, will not require the savings which you have destined for my settlement.—You must think of that no more; the attention you excited has undone you.—Is the evil without remedy?—Without remedy.—But if I do not find a husband, is it necessary that I should shut myself up in a convent?—Unless you wish to perpetuate my sorrow and my remorse till my eyes are closed. To this point

must I come : your sisters will be round my bed at that terrible moment : think, if I was to see you among them, what would be the effect of your presence in these last moments ! My daughter, for such you are in spite of me, your sisters have obtained from the laws a name which you only derive from guilt ; do not torment a dying mother ; allow her to sink peaceably into the tomb ; let her be able to say to herself when she is about to appear before the great Judge, that she has repaired her fault as far as she could ; allow her to flatter herself, that after her death you will not introduce trouble into the family, and that you will not attempt to vindicate rights which you do not possess. — Mamma, said I, be easy upon that head ; send for a lawyer, let him draw up an instrument of renunciation, and I will subscribe whatever

you please.—That is impossible ; children cannot disinherit themselves ; this is the chastisement of a father and mother justly incensed. If it should please God to summon me hence to-morrow, to-morrow should I be compelled, in that extremity, to open myself to my husband, in order to take in concert the same measures. Do not expose me to an indiscretion which would render me odious in his eyes, and which would involve consequences by which you would be dishonoured. If you survive me, you will remain without a name, without fortune, and without consideration ; unfortunate wretch, tell me what is to become of you ! what ideas do you wish me to carry with me at my death ? I must then tell your father..... What am I to tell him ? That you are not his child !.... My daughter, could I, by falling at your feet, prevail upon

you.... but you have no feeling, you have the inflexible soul of your father...
... At this moment M. Simonin entered ; he perceived the disorder of my mother ; he was fond of her ; he was passionate ; he stopped short, and darting a fierce glance at me, he said, Be gone. Had he been my father, I would not have obeyed him, but he was not. He added, addressing himself to the domestic who lighted me, Tell her never again to appear.

I shut myself up in my little prison. I mused upon what my mother had told me. I dropped down upon my knees ; I prayed to God to instruct me ; I prayed long ; I remained with my face fixed to the ground. We seldom invoke the voice of heaven, but when we are in a state of doubt, and it almost always advises us to obey. This was the alternative I embraced.

My

My parents wish me to become a nun ; perhaps too it is the will of God ; alas ! I will be one ; since I am to be wretched, of what importance is it where I am !.... I entreated the girl who waited on me, to inform me when my father went out. Next day I asked my mother's permission to see her ; she answered, that she promised M. Simonin that she would not, but that I might write to her with a crayon which was given me. I wrote then upon a piece of paper [that fatal paper has been recovered, and it has been employed against me but too successfully.] : “ Mamma, I am sorry for
“ all the vexations I have occasioned
“ you ; I ask your pardon ; I propose
“ to put an end to them. Dispose of me
“ as you please ; if it is your will that I
“ should take the vows, I hope also it is
“ the will of God...” The servant took this note, and carried it to my mother.
She

She came up stairs again a moment after, and said to me with transport : Mademoiselle, since but a single word was necessary to make your father, your mother, and yourself happy, why did you require to be entreated so long ? My master and mistress look so as I have never seen them since I came here : they quarrelled continually about you ; thank God, I shall see it no more... While she spoke to me, I thought I had signed my death-warrant ; and this presentiment, Sir, will be fulfilled if you abandon me. Some days elapsed without my hearing any thing ; but one morning, about nine o'clock, M. Simonin abruptly opened my door, and entered in his night-gown and night-cap. Since I had known that he was not my father, his presence only inspired me with terror. I rose and paid him my respects. It seemed to me as if I had

two

two hearts. I could not think of my mother without emotion, without feeling an inclination to shed tears; it was not so with regard to M. Simonin. It is certain that a father inspires a kind of sentiment which we feel for nobody in the world but him; this cannot be understood but by those who have found themselves, like me, in the presence of a man who had long sustained, and who had just lost that august character. Others will ever remain ignorant of it. If I passed from his presence into that of my mother, I seemed to be another person. He said to me : Suzan, do you acknowledge that billet ? Yes, Sir.—Did you write it freely ?—I cannot say that I did.—Are you at least resolved to execute what it promises ?—I am.—Have you no predilection for any particular convent ?—No : they are indifferent to me.—It is enough.

Such

Such were my answers, but unfortunately they were not written. For a whole fortnight I heard nothing upon the subject, and I supposed that they had applied to different religious houses, and that the scandal my conduct had excited, prevented my being received in the situation of a candidate. They were less scrupulous at Longchamp, doubtless because it was insinuated to them that I understood music and had a good voice. The difficulties which had been encountered, and the favour I received in being admitted into this house, were greatly exaggerated; I was even prevailed upon to write to the Superior. I was not aware of the consequences of the evidence by writing which was required of me; they too were afraid it would have seemed that I might one day retract my vows. They wished to have an attestation under my
own

own hands, that they had been voluntary. Without such a motive how could this letter, which ought to have remained in the hands of the Superior, have passed in the sequel into the possession of my brothers in law? But let us quickly shut our eyes on this scene: it shews me M. Simonin in a view, under which I no longer wish to consider him;—he is no more. I was conducted to Longchamp, accompanied by my mother. I did not even ask leave to bid M. Simonin adieu; the thought of it, I confess, never occurred till I was upon the road. I was expected. I was introduced by my history, and by my talents. They said nothing to me of the one, but they were eager to ascertain whether the acquaintance they had made was of any importance. After they had talked of a variety of indifferent things (for, after what had happened,

pened,

pened, you may well imagine they they neither spoke to me of God, nor of my call, nor of the dangers of the world, nor of the calmness of the religious life; and that they did not venture to utter a single word of that pious common-place talk in which these first moments are generally employed), the Superior said: Mademoiselle, you understand music; you sing; we have a harpsichord; if you please, we will go to the parlour..... My soul was wrung with agony; but this was not the time to display reluctance: my mother went first, I followed, and the Superior closed the train, with some nuns whom curiosity had attracted. It was night. They brought me candles. I sat down at the harpsichord. I made a great many flourishes, while I endeavoured to recollect a piece of music, of which I had plenty, and yet I could
not

not hit upon one; the Superior, however, pressed me; and without any artifice, by mere habit, because the piece was familiar to me, I sung: *Sad array, flambeaux pale, day more dismal than the night, &c.* I don't know what effect this produced, but they did not listen to me long; I was interrupted by praises, which I was a good deal surprised to have merited so soon, and at so little expence. My mother consigned me to the care of the Superior; gave me her hand to kiss, and departed.

I was now in another house, a nun, and a candidate for admission, and with every appearance of soliciting this admission from the unbiassed inclination of my own will. But you, Sir, who are acquainted with every thing that passed up to this moment, what do you think of the subject? Most of these things

things were not alledged when I wished to retract my vows ; some of them, because they were truths destitute of proof, others, because they would have rendered me odious without serving my cause. I should only have been considered as an unnatural child who sullied the memory of my parents to obtain my liberty. They were in possession of the proof of what was *against* me ; what was *for* me could neither be brought forward nor proved. I was unwilling even that the suspicion of my birth should be insinuated to the judges. My counsel wished to summon in evidence my mother's director and mine ; but from the same motives, much less would I permit this to be done. But, by the way, lest I should forget, and lest the desire of serving me should prevent you from making the reflection, under the correction of

your better judgment, I believe that it would be wiser to say nothing of my skill in music, and my playing upon the harpsichord. Nothing more would be required to betray my condition. The ostentation of these talents does not consist with the obscurity and the repose which I seek. Those in my situation do not possess them, and it is proper that I too should seem ignorant. If I am constrained to exile myself from my country, they will prove a resource to me. Exile myself from my country! Tell me why I revolt from the idea? It is because I know not where to go; because I am young, and destitute of experience; because I dread mankind and vice; because I have always lived recluse, and that if I were out of Paris, I should consider myself lost in the world. All this, perhaps, is not true, but such are my feelings. That
I should

I should not know where to go, or whither to turn me, depends only, Sir, upon you.

The Superiors at Longchamp, as well as in most religious houses, change every three years. It was a Madame Moni who entered upon the charge when I was conducted to the house ; it is impossible for me to speak too highly of her ; yet her goodness proved my ruin. She was a woman of sense, and acquainted with the human heart. She could make allowances, though nobody had less occasion for it, for we all were her children. She never saw faults but those of which she could not help taking notice, or the importance of which could not be overlooked. I speak of her without interest. I discharged my duty with exactness, and she did me the justice to say, that I committed no fault which she had to punish, or which she had to pardon.

don. If she had any predilections, they were inspired by merit. After this I don't know if I ought to tell you that she loved me tenderly, and that I was not the least of her favourites. I know that is a high panegyric I bestow upon myself, greater than you can imagine, since you never knew her. The name of favourite is that which the rest invidiously bestow upon those who are best beloved by the Superior. If there was any defect with which I could reproach Madame Moni, it was that her taste for virtue, piety, candour, gentleness, talents, honour, induced her to give a marked preference to those who possessed them; and that she knew well that those who could not pretend to these qualities, were but the more humbled by her conduct. She likewise possessed the faculty, perhaps more frequent in convents than in the world, of a prompt

prompt discernment of minds. It rarely happened that a nun who did not please her at first, ever proved agreeable to her afterwards. She quickly took me into her favour, and from the very beginning I reposed the most perfect confidence in her: ill-fated those from whom she could not extract it without effort! they must have been bad without resource, and conscious of their misfortune. She talked to me of my adventure at St. Mary's. I related it to her with as little disguise as to you; I told her every thing I have now written; both what regarded my birth, and what concerned my sufferings; nothing was forgotten. She lamented my fate, she comforted me, and painted more agreeable prospects to my hopes. Meanwhile, the period of my postulation elapsed, that of my assuming the habit arrived, and I took

it. I performed my noviciate without aversion. I passed rapidly over those two years, because they contained nothing melancholy to me, but the secret feeling that I was slowly approaching a state for which I was not formed. Sometimes it was renewed with violence, and as often as this happened I recurred to my good Superior, who embraced me, who unbosomed my soul, who displayed to me her arguments with force, and always concluded with telling me : And have not other situations too their crosses ? We are apt to be sensible only of our own. Come, my child, let us fall on our knees and pray. She then knelt down and prayed aloud, but with so much unction, eloquence, mildness, elevation, and force, that you would have said that she was inspired by the Spirit of God. Her thoughts, her expressions, her images, penetrated

to the very bottom of the heart ; at first you listened ; by degrees you were elevated, you were united with her ; the soul was thrilled, and you partook her transports. Her design was not to seduce, but certainly this she accomplished. We left her with a heart enraptured, our countenances displayed joy and extasy, we shed tears so delightful ! It was an impression which she herself took, which she long retained, and which those to whom it was communicated likewise preserved. It is not to my own experience that I refer, it is to that of all the nuns. Some of them have told me that they have felt the want of her consolation as that of an exquisite pleasure ; and I believe I required only a little more habit to reach that point. Nevertheless, at the approach of my profession, I experienced a melancholy so profound, that it exposed my good Superior to severe trials. Her talents forsook her ; she herself

acknowledged it to me. I don't know, said she, what passes within me; it seems when you come as if God retired, and his spirit were silent. It is in vain that I animate myself, that I seek ideas, that I attempt to exalt my soul; I feel myself an ordinary and humble woman. I am afraid to speak. . . Ah! my dear mother, said I, what presentiment! if it were God that rendered you dumb! . . . One day, that I felt myself more uncertain and more depressed than ever, I went to her cell; my presence at first rendered her speechless; it seemed that she read in my eyes, in my whole person, that the profound sentiment I carried within me, was beyond her strength, and she was unwilling to struggle without the certainty of being victorious. Nevertheless, she made the attempt; by degrees she warmed; in proportion as my sorrow subsided, her enthusiasm increased. She threw herself suddenly
4 upon

upon her knees, I followed her example. I imagined that I was to partake her transports ; I wished it. She pronounced some words, then all at once she was silent ; I waited in vain, she spoke no more ; she rose, she burst into tears, she took me by the hand, and squeezing it between hers :—Oh ! my dear child, said she, what a cruel effect have you produced upon me ! Observe the consequence ; the spirit has withdrawn, I feel it ; go, let God speak to you himself, since it is not his pleasure to communicate himself by me. . . In reality, I know not what had passed within her ; whether I had inspired her with a distrust of her powers, which has never been dissipated, whether I had rendered her timid, or really broken her correspondence with heaven, but the talent of consolation returned to her no more. Upon the eve of my profession

sion I went to see her; she laboured under a melancholy equal to my own. I wept, and so did she; I threw myself at her feet, she blessed me, she raised me up, embraced me, and again sent me away, saying:—I am weary of life, I wish to die; I have asked of God never to see this day, but it is not his will. Go, I will speak to your mother, I will pass the night in prayer; pray also, but go to bed, I command you.... Allow me, answered I, to join you.... I allow you from nine o'clock till eleven, no more, no more. At half past nine o'clock I will begin to pray, and you will begin also; but at eleven o'clock, you will allow me to pray alone, and you will take repose. Go, dear child, I shall watch before God the remainder of the night.

She wished to pray, but could not. I slept, and in the mean time this holy
woman

woman went through the passages, knocking at every door ; she awoke the nuns, and made them go down without noise to the church. All of them repaired thither ; and when they were there, she invited them to address themselves to heaven in my favour. This prayer was made in silence ; then she extinguished the light, all repeated together the *Miserere*, except the Superior, who, prostrate at the foot of the altar, macerated herself in a cruel manner, saying : O God ! If it is for any fault which I have committed that you have departed from me, grant me forgiveness. I do not ask you to restore me the gift of which you have deprived me, but that you would address yourself to this innocent, who sleeps while I here invoke you in her favour. My God, speak to her, speak to her parents, and forgive me.

The

The next day, early in the morning she entered my cell ; I did not hear her, I was not yet awake. She sat down by my bedside. She had laid one of her hands gently upon my forehead. She gazed upon me ; disquietude, agitation, and sorrow, succeeded upon her countenance ; and such was the appearance she exhibited to me when I opened my eyes. She did not mention to me what had passed during the night ; she only asked, If I had gone to bed early ? I answered : At the hour you commanded me.—If I had rested ? Profoundly.—I expected so.... How I was ? Very well.—And you, my dear mother ?—Alas said she, I never saw any person take the vows without disquietude ; but I never experienced so much anxiety about any one, as about you ; I wish sincerely that you may be happy.—If you continue to love me,
I shall

I shall be happy.—Ah, did it but depend upon that!—Have you thought of nothing during the night?—No.—You have had no dream?—None.—What passes at present in your mind?—I am stupid; I yield to my fate with repugnance, and without inclination; I feel that necessity hurries me on, and I allow myself to go. Ah! my dear mother, I feel none of that mild joy, that thrilling sensation, that melancholy, that gentle perturbation, which I have sometimes remarked in those who stood in my present situation. I am weak; I cannot even weep. That it is the desire of my parents, it must be done, is the only idea which occupies me.... But you say nothing to me.—I am not come to discourse to you, but to see and to hear you. I expect your mother; endeavour not to agitate me; allow my feelings to work up in my mind; when

when it is full I will go away. I must be silent : I know myself ; I have but one impulse, and I must not waste its strength with you. Repose while my visit lasts ; say only a few words, and allow me to find here what I am come to seek. I will go, and God will perform the rest....—I was silent, I leaned upon my pillow, I held out to her one of my hands, which she took ; she seemed to meditate, and to meditate deeply ; she studiously kept her eyes shut ; sometimes she opened them, raised them to heaven, and again settled them upon me ; she was agitated, her soul was filled with tumult ; she became composed, and again her agitation returned. In truth, this woman was born to be a prophetess ; she had the countenance and the character of one. She had been beautiful ; but age, while it rendered her features heavy, and
planted

planted large wrinkles upon her face, had still added dignity to her physiognomy. She had small eyes, but they seemed either to look inwards upon herself, or to soar above the objects by which she was surrounded, and to expatiate beyond them; always into the past, or into the future. She sometimes squeezed my hand; she abruptly asked what o'clock it was?—It is near six.—Adieu, they are coming to dress you; I do not wish to be present, it would distract me... I have only care; it is to preserve moderation in the first moments.

She had scarcely gone out, when the mother of the novices and my companions came: the former stripped me of the religious habit, and dressed me in the cloaths common in the world; it is the custom, you know. I heard nothing of what was said around me: I was reduced almost to the state of an automaton; I took

no

no notice of any thing ; only I had at intervals, as it were, slight convulsive motions. They told me what it was necessary to do ; they were often obliged to repeat it to me, for I never heard the first time ; and this proceeded not from my thinking upon some other subject, but because I was absorbed ; my head was fatigued as if it had been by excessive reflection. In the mean time my Superior was conversing with my mother ; I never knew what passed at this interview, which lasted for a long time : I was told only, that when they separated, my mother was so embarrassed, that she could not find the door by which she came in ; and that the Superior went out with her hands locked and fixed against her brow.

The clock struck ; I went down. The assembly was not numerous. A sermon

sermon was preached to me: whether it designed me good or bad I know not, for I did not hear a word: they disposed of me all this morning, which is a vacuum in my life, as they pleased, for I was insensible of its lapse; I know neither what was done nor what was said. They no doubt interrogated me, I no doubt answered; I pronounced some vows, but I have no recollection of them, and I became a nun as innocently as I was made a christian: I no more comprehended the ceremony of my profession, than that of my baptism, with this difference, that the one confers grace, and the other supposes it. Well, Sir, though I did not remonstrate at Longchamp, as I did at Saint Mary's, do you think me the more bound on that account? I appeal to your judgement, I appeal to the judgement of God. I was in a state of such

profound melancholy, that some days after, when they announced to me that I belonged to the choir, I did not know what they meant. I asked if it was really true that I had made profession? I wished to see the signature of my vows. Not contented with these proofs, I made them bring the attestations of the whole community, and that of some strangers whom they had invited to the ceremony. Addressing myself several times to the Superior, I said to her : Is this then really the case ? I expected always that she was going to answer : No, my child, they deceive you. Her repeated assurances could not convince me ; I could not believe that in the space of a whole day, so bustling, so varied, so crowded with singular and striking circumstances, I could not remember one, not even the countenance, of those who attended me, nor
that

that of either the minister who preached, or of him who received my vows. The changing of my religious dress for that of the world; is the only thing which I recollect; from that moment I was what they call physically insensible. It was some months before I recovered from this state; and it is to this protracted kind of convalescence, that I ascribe my profound forgetfulness of what is past; like those who, in the course of a tedious illness, have talked sensibly, and received the sacrament; and who, after they are restored to health, have no memory of the circumstances. I have seen many instances of it in our house, and I have said to myself, this is probably what happened to me on the day that I made profession. But it remains to be enquired, whether these actions are performed by the person, and whether the person be really there, though she appear to be so.

In the course of the same year I suffered three afflicting losses : that of my father, or rather of him who passed as such ; he was old, he had laboured hard, he was worn out ; that of my Superior ; and that of my mother.

This worthy nun long felt her hour approaching ; she condemned herself to silence ; she ordered her coffin to be brought into her chamber. She had lost the power of sleeping ; she had passed her days and nights in writing and in meditation ; she has left fifteen meditations, which I think are most beautiful ; I have a copy of them. If you are curious any day to see the ideas which this event suggests, I shall send you them : they are entitled, *The last Moments of Sister Moni.*

At the approach of death, she made herself be dressed ; she was laid upon a bed ; they administered to her the
last

the last sacrament ; she held a Christ in her arms. It was night ; the light of the tapers illuminated the mournful scene ; we were around her, we shed tears ; her cell resounded with cries, all on a sudden her eyes sparkled ; she raised herself up hastily, and spoke ; her voice was almost as strong as it was when she was in health ; she reproached us with our tears, which seemed to envy her eternal felicity. My children, your grief is mistimed. It is there, it is there, said she, pointing to the heavens, that I shall be of service to you ; my eyes shall rest perpetually upon this house ; I will intercede for you, and I shall be heard. Come near, all of you, that I may embrace you ; come, and receive my blessing and last adieus. When she was uttering these last words, this singular woman, who has left behind her never-ending regrets, departed.

My mother died, on her return from a visit which she made to one of her daughters, at the end of autumn. She was splenetic; her health was very much impaired. I never knew either my father's name, or the history of my birth. The person who was both her and my director, sent me from her a small packet containing fifty louis, with a note wrapped up in a small piece of linen. The note was as follows : “ My
“ child, it is a trifle, but my conscience
“ does not permit me to dispose of a
“ greater sum ; it is the fruits of my
“ savings upon the small presents made
“ me by M. Simonin. Lead a holy
“ life ; it will conduce most to your
“ happiness, even in this world. Pray
“ for me : the crime to which you owe
“ your birth, is the only one of impor-
“ tance which I have committed ; aid
“ me in expiating it ; and may God
“ forgive

“ forgive me for bringing you into the
“ world, in consideration of the good
“ works you may perform. Above all,
“ be not troublesome to the family ;
“ and though the choice of the condi-
“ tion which you have embraced, is not
“ so voluntary as I could have wished,
“ dread the idea of changing it. Would
“ that I had been shut up in a convent
“ for my whole life ! I should not be so
“ distressed with the thought of hearing
“ in a short time my irrevocable doom.
“ Consider, my child, that the fate of
“ your mother in another world, de-
“ pends much upon the conduct which
“ you hold in this ; the omniscient
“ God will apply to me in his justice
“ all the good and all the evil which
“ which you shall perform. Adieu,
“ Susan ; ask nothing of your sisters,
“ they are not in a situation to assist
“ you ; expect nothing from your fa-
“ ther,

“ther, he has gone before me ; he has
“seen the great day ; he waits my
“coming ; my presence will be less
“terrible to him than his will be to me.
“Adieu, once more. Ah ! wretched
“mother ! Ah ! wretched child ! your
“sisters are arrived ; I am not pleased
“with them ; they seize, they carry off
“my property, they quarrel under the
“eyes of a dying mother, from motives
“of interest ; a circumstance which is to
“me the most distressing. When
“they approach my bed, I turn to the
“other side ; what do I see in them ?
“two creatures, in whom indigence has
“stifled every natural feeling. They
“sigh after the little that I am about to
“leave ; they put indecent questions
“to the physician and nurse, which
“mark the impatience with which they
“expect the moment when I shall go
“hence, and which will put them in
“possession

“ possession of every thing about me.
“ They are suspicious, I know not
“ why, lest I should have some money
“ concealed about the mattrass : there
“ is no pretence which they have not
“ employed to make me rise, and they
“ have succeeded ; but luckily the
“ person with whom I was to make the
“ deposit, came last night, and I have
“ sent you the small packet with this
“ letter, which he has written to my
“ dictation. Burn the letter ; and when
“ you know that I am no more, which
“ will speedily happen, you will say
“ mass for me, and you will renew your
“ vows, for I still desire that you re-
“ main in the convent : the idea of your
“ being cast friendless, destitute, and
“ young upon the world, would render
“ my last moments completely mise-
“ rable.”

My

My father died on the 5th of January, my Superior at the end of the same month, and my mother on the second Christmas holiday.

Sister Saint - Christian succeeded Mother Moni. But, ah ! Sir, what a difference between the one and the other ! I have told you what a woman the former was. The latter had an insignificant character ; her mind was narrow and superstitious ; she gave into new opinions ; she conferred with Sulpicians and Jesuits. She took an aversion to all her predecessors favourites :—the house instantly became a scene of disturbance, animosities, slanders, accusations, calumnies, and persecutions : we had to discuss theological questions which we did not understand, to subscribe formulas, and to conform to singular practices. Mother Moni did
not

not approve of those penitential exercises which concerned the body; she macerated herself only twice in the course of her life, once on the eve of my profession, and another time on a similar occasion. She used to say of these penances, that they corrected no fault, that they only served as a ground of pride. Her desire was that her nuns should behave well, and that they should keep their bodies sound, and their minds tranquil. The first thing she did when she entered upon her charge, was to make them bring her all the hair cloths, and the scourges; and to forbid them to spoil their food with ashes, to lie on hard beds, or to provide themselves with any of these instruments. The second, on the contrary, sent back to every nun her hair-cloth and her scourge, and took from them the Old and New Testament.

tament. The favourites of the former were not the favourites of the succeeding reign... The existing Superior was indifferent to me, to say no worse, because I had been beloved by her predecessor; but I was not long of embittering my lot, by some actions which you will call either imprudent or spirited, according to the light in which you view them. In the first place, I wholly abandoned myself to the grief which I felt for the loss of our former Superior, praised her upon all occasions, and suggested comparisons between her and the present governess, which were not favourable to the latter; described the state of the house for years past, recalled to their recollection the peace we enjoyed, the indulgence we experienced, and the nourishment, both spiritual and temporal, which was then administered to us; every thing, in fine, which

which tended to exalt the morals, the feelings, and the character of Sister Moni. Secondly, I cast my hair-cloth into the fire, threw away my scourge, preached to my friends upon the subject, and engaged some of them to follow my example. The third thing I did, was to provide myself with an Old and New Testament ; the fourth, to renounce all parties, and to abide by the name of Christian, without accepting the title of Jansenist, or Molinist. The fifth was, strictly to regulate my conduct by the rules of the house, without either wishing to do more or less than they required, and consequently not to perform any work of supererogation, those of obligation, appearing to me to be more than sufficient ; not to mount to the organ except on holidays ; not to sing except when I was of the choir ; and no longer to suffer them to abuse

abuse my complaisance and my talents, by setting me to do every thing at all times. I read their constitution over and over again, I learnt it by heart: if they ordered me to do any thing which was either not clearly expressed, or which was omitted, or which appeared to me to be contrary to what was there enjoined, I would firmly refuse to comply, I would take the book and say: These are the engagements that I have taken, and I have taken no others..... My discourses made some converts. The authority of the mistresses was limited, they could no longer dispose of us like slaves. Not a day passed without some scene of notoriety. In cases of uncertainty, my companions came to consult me, and I always took part against despotism. I had soon the air of a factious person, and perhaps I acted the part of one.

The

The Grand Vicars of the Archbishop were continually called in. I appeared; I defended myself, I defended my companions; and it never once happened that they were condemned, such care did I take to have reason on my side. It was impossible to attack me on the score of discharging my duty: that I scrupulously performed. As for those little favours which a Superior is always at liberty to grant or to withhold, I never asked them. I did not appear in the parlour; and with regard to visits, not knowing any person, I never received any. But I had burnt my hair-cloth, and my scourge; I had advised others to do the same; I never wished to hear either good or ill spoken of Jansenism or Molinism. When they asked me if I acknowledged submission to the constitution, I replied, that I did to the church; and, if I received

the Bull? that I received the gospel. They visited my cell, they found the Old and New Testament in it. I had let escape some imprudent expressions about a suspicious intimacy of some of the favourites; the Superior had long and frequent interviews with a young ecclesiastic, the reason of which I had distinguished from the pretext: I omitted nothing which could make myself feared, hated, and undone; and I accomplished it at last. They no longer complained of me to the Superiors, but they did every thing in their power to render my life uncomfortable. They forbade the nuns to come near me, and I soon found myself deserted. I had a few friends who contrived, by stealth, to get the better of the restraint which was imposed upon them; and now that they could not pass the day with me, they visited me
at

at night, or at forbidden hours; they set spies upon us; they surprised me sometimes with one, sometimes with another; this sort of imprudence was all they wished for, and I was punished for it in a most inhuman manner: they condemned me for whole weeks to pass the service upon my knees, apart from the rest of the choir; to live upon bread and water; to remain shut up in my cell; to perform the meanest offices in the house. Those whom they called my accomplices were no better treated. When they could not find me in a fault, they took one for granted: they sometimes gave me orders which it was impossible to execute, and punished me for not obeying them; they changed the hours of service and of eating; they deranged, without my knowledge, the whole cloistral order; and with all the attention I could be-

stow, I was every day culpable, and every day punished. I had courage, but there is no degree of fortitude that can support desertion, solitude, and persecution. Things came to such a height, that they made sport of tormenting me; it was the amusement of a band of fifty persons. It is impossible to enter into a minute detail of their malicious tricks; they prevented me from sleeping, from watching, and from praying. One day they stole some of my clothes, another day they carried off my keys, or my breviary; my lock was spoiled; they hindered me from doing my duty, and what I did they never failed to derange; they ascribed to me actions and speeches of which I was not the author; they made me responsible for every thing, and my life was one continued scene of real or pretended faults and of chastisements.—My
health

health was not proof against so long and severe trials ; I fell into a state of dejection, spleen, and melancholy. At first I had recourse to the altar for energy of mind, and I found some at times. I wavered between resignation and despair, sometimes submitting to all the rigour of my fate, at other times meditating my deliverance by violent means. There was a deep well at the foot of the garden ; how often have I looked at it ! There was by the side of the well a stone seat ; how often have I sat upon, it with my head leaning upon the brink ! how often, in the tumult of my ideas, have I suddenly got up and resolved to put an end to my sufferings ! What prevented me ? Why did I then prefer lamentation, crying aloud, trampling my veil under my feet, tearing my hair, and macerating my face with my nails ?—If God prevented me from de-

stroying myself, why did he not also put a stop to these acts of violence?—I am going to tell you a thing, which will, perhaps, appear strange, but which is not the less true; it is, that I have no doubt but my frequent visits to the well were observed, and that my cruel enemies flattered themselves that I would one day execute the purpose which was conceived in the bottom of my breast. When I went that way, they affected to part from me, and to look in a different direction. I have several times found the garden door open when it ought to have been shut, particularly on those days when they had multiplied the causes of my chagrin, and when they had roused the violence of my temper to such a pitch, that they thought my intellects were deranged. But as soon as I discovered that they presented this form of death to my
despair,

despair, that they led me, as it were, by the hand to this well, and that I found it always ready to receive me, it ceased to employ my thoughts ; my mind turned to other objects ; I went through the galleries, and measured the height of the windows ; at night, when I was undressing myself, I tried, without thinking of it, the strength of my garters : another day I would not eat ; I went down to the hall, and remained there leaning against the wall, my hands hanging down by my sides, and my eyes shut ; I would not touch the meat they set before me ; and in this state I so completely forgot myself, that I would stay after all the nuns had gone out. They affected to withdraw without making a noise ; and leaving me there, they afterwards punished me for neglecting the exercises. What shall I tell you ? They disgusted me with

almost all the means of ridding myself of my existence, because, far from opposing my intentions, they put the instruments of executing them in my way. We do not like the appearance of people pushing us out of the world ; and perhaps, had they seemed eager to keep me in it, I should have been no more. When we take away our life, it is perhaps for the purpose of occasioning distress to others ; and we preserve it, when we think that they would be pleased at our taking it away : these are the secret workings of our minds. In truth, if it is possible for me to recollect what passed within me by the side of the well, I think I called upon those wretches who kept at a distance for the sake of favouring the commission of a crime : Take one step towards me, shew the smallest desire of saving me, run to prevent me, and
be

be assured you shall be too late.....In fact, I lived only because they wished my death. The savage passion for tormenting and destroying decays in the world; it is indefatigable in the cloister.

I was in this situation when, reviewing my past life, I conceived the design of renouncing my vows. At first I thought of it slightly. Alone, deserted, without support, how could I succeed in a project so difficult, though seconded by all the assistance of which I was in want? Yet this idea tranquilized me, my spirit settled, I was more myself; I avoided some evils, and I supported more patiently those by which I was assailed. This change was remarked, and it excited astonishment; malice stopped short, like a cowardly foe who pursues, and against whom you make a stand when he does not expect

it. There is one question, Sir, which I would wish to propose to you ; it is, why, in spite of all the gloomy ideas which pass through the mind of a nun reduced to despair, that of setting fire to the house never occurs to her imagination ? I never entertained the design, nor did some others, although the thing be very easy to execute. Nothing more is necessary than, upon a windy day, to apply a flambeau to a garret, a pile of wood, a passage. No convents are set fire to ; yet upon such occasions the doors are thrown open, and they save themselves who can. May not the reason be, that they fear the danger that might overtake themselves and those they love, and that they disdain a relief which is common to them with those they hate ? This last idea is, perhaps, too subtle to be true.

From

From occupying ourselves greatly with any object, we feel its justice, and even believe its possibility; we are very strong when we have reached that point. It was to me the business of a fortnight; my mind is rapid in its movement. What was the object? To draw up a memorial and to present it for a consultation; both were attended with danger.—Since this resolution had taken place in my mind, I was observed with greater attention than ever; they followed me with their eyes; I never took a step that was not traced; I never uttered a word that was not weighed. They insinuated themselves about me, they endeavoured to sound me, they questioned me, they affected compassion and friendship, they reviewed my past life, they faintly blamed me, they devised excuses, they hoped a more correct conduct, they flattered me
that

that the future would be more serene ; at the same time they entered my cell every moment, by day, by night, upon some pretext or other ; abruptly and cautiously they drew aside my curtains and retired. I had contracted the habit of going to bed in my clothes. I had another practice, that of reducing my confession to writing. Upon the appointed days I asked for ink and paper from the Superior, who never refused me. I waited therefore for the day of confession, and in the mean time I arranged in my head what I had to propose. It was an abridgement of all I have written to you, only I explained myself under feigned names. But I committed three absurdities : the first was, telling the Superior that I should have a great many things to write, and upon this pretext, asking of her more paper than is allowed ; the second, occupying myself with my memorial

morial, and neglecting my confession; and the third, having made out no confession, and being unprepared for this act of religion, remaining at the confessional but a single moment. All this was remarked, and they concluded that the paper I had asked for was employed in a different manner from that I had mentioned. But if it had not served for my confession, as was evident, how had it been used? Without knowing that they were impressed with these disquietudes, I felt that it would not do for them to find upon me a writing of this importance. At first I thought of sewing it in my bolster, and in my mattress; then of concealing it in my clothes, of burying it in the garden, of throwing it in the fire. You cannot believe how strongly I was urged to write, and how much I was embarrassed with it when it was written. First, I sealed

the paper, thrust it into my bosom, and went to service, to which the bell summoned. I was oppressed with an alarm which my emotions betrayed. I was seated by the side of a young nun who loved me; sometimes I had seen her gaze upon me with pity, and shed tears. She did not speak to me, but certainly she was unhappy. At the risk of every consequence, I resolved to entrust her with my paper. At the moment of the prayer, when all the nuns fall upon their knees, bend forward, and are, as it were, sunk in their pews, I gently drew the paper from my bosom, and held it out to her behind me; she took it and thrust it into her bosom. This was the most important service she had done me; but I had received many others; she had laboured whole months, without being discovered, in removing the little obstacles with which they had encumbered

encumbered my duties, and, upon my failure, to have an opportunity to chastise me. She came and knocked at my door when it was time to go out; she put to rights every thing they had deranged; she had gone and rung the bell, or made responses upon the proper occasions; she was in every place where I ought to have been. Of all this I was ignorant.

I did well in employing this expedient. When we left the choir, the Superior said to me:—Sister Susan, follow me....I followed her; then stopping in the passage at another door, This is your cell, said she, Sister St. Jerome will occupy yours.... I entered, and she along with me; we had both sat down without speaking, when a nun appeared with some clothes which she laid upon a chair, and the Superior said:—Sister Susan, undress, and take these clothes.... I obeyed in her presence;

sence; in the mean time she was attentive to all my motions. The sister who had brought the clothes was at the door; she re-entered, carried away those I had quitted; and went out, followed by the Superior. I was not informed of the reason of these proceedings, nor did I enquire. During this interval, they had searched every part of my cell, they had unsewed my pillow and my mattress, they had displaced and rummaged everything. They traced my footsteps; they went to the confessional, to the church, to the garden, to the well, to the low seat; I saw part of these searches, and I suspected the rest. They found nothing, but they remained as fully convinced as ever, that there was some foundation for their anxiety. They continued to watch me with spies for many days. They went wherever I had

I had gone ; they looked every where, but in vain. At last the Superior believed that it was impossible to know the truth, but from myself. She one day entered my cell, and said to me, Sister Susan, you have faults, but that of lying is not among the number ; then tell me the truth : What have you done with all the paper I gave you ?—Madam, I have told you.—That is impossible, for you asked me for a great deal, and you were only a moment at the confessional.—It is true.—What then have you done with it ? — What I told you.—Well then, swear to me, by the holy obedience you have vowed to God, that such is the truth, and, in spite of appearances, I will believe you.—Madam, you are not permitted to exact an oath for a slight matter, and I am not at liberty to take it. I cannot swear.—You deceive me, Sister Susan,
and

and you are not aware to what you expose yourself. What have you done with the paper I gave you?—I have told you.—Where is it?—I have it not.—What use have you made of it?—Such as is made of those writings which are useless after they have served their purpose.—Swear to me, by the sacred obedience you owe, that it has all been employed in writing your confession, and is no longer in your possession.—Madam, I repeat, this second point being no more important than the first, I cannot swear.—Swear, said she to me, or. . . . —I will not swear.—You will not swear?—No, Madam.—You are then guilty?—And of what am I guilty?—Of every thing; there is nothing of which you are not capable. You have affected to praise my predecessor, in order to depreciate me; to condemn the customs she had proscribed, which she
had

had abolished, and which I conceived it my duty to re-establish; you have endeavoured to destroy the principles of subordination in the community; you have infringed its laws, you have sown division among its members; you have failed in the performance of every duty which your situation required; and what to me is of all the most painful consideration, you have compelled me to punish you and those whom you had seduced. While it was in my power to enforce against you every severity which the most rigorous measures could inflict, I yet treated you with indulgence; I imagined that you would acknowledge your faults, that you would resume the spirit which befits your situation, and that you would solicit with anxiety your reconciliation with me; but I have been mistaken. Something is in agitation in your mind,

which is not good; you are occupied with some projects; the interest of the house demands that I should know, and I will know them, depend upon it. Sister Susan, tell me the truth.—I have told it you.—I am about to leave you; dread my return; I will again sit down; I allow you yet a moment to determine. Your papers, if they exist. . . — I have them not.—Or the oath that they only contained your confession.— I cannot do it. . . . — She remained a moment in silence, then she retired, and returned with four of her favourites. The appearance of them all was distracted and furious. I threw myself at their feet, I implored their mercy. They all exclaimed in concert, No mercy. Madam, do not allow yourself to be moved by her supplications; she must give up her papers, or go quietly. I embraced the knees first of one, then of another,

another; I addressed them by their names, saying: Sister Saint Agnes, Sister Saint Julia, what have I done to you? Why do you incense my Superior against me? Was it thus that I ever acted? How often have I interceded for you! You then remembers my kindness no more. You were in fault, but I am not. The Superior, unmoved, looked at me and said, Give up your papers, wretch, or disclose what they contained.—Madam, said they to her, do not ask her for them any more; you are too indulgent; you are not sufficiently acquainted with her character: she is an untractable spirit with whom it is impossible to succeed but by proceeding to extremities; she compels you to embrace that alternative, and she must suffer for it. Give us orders to strip her, and let her be consigned to the place destined for those who pursue a

similar conduct.—My dear mother, I swear I have done nothing which can offend either God or man.—That is not the oath which I exact.—She may have written against us, against you, some memorial to the Grand Vicar, or to the Archbishop; God knows the description she may have given of the internal state of the house; accusation easily obtains credit. Madam, you must dispose of this creature, unless you would have our fall to be determined by her.—The Superior added: Sister Susan, consider. . . . I rose abruptly, and said to her: Madam, I have considered every consequence. I feel that I am undone, but a moment sooner or later is not worth the trouble of a thought. Do with me whatever you please, yield to their fury, consummate your injustice.—Immediately I held out my hands to them; they were seized by her companions, who

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who tore away my veil, and stripped me without shame. They found in my bosom a miniature picture of my old Superior; they seized it: I entreated permission to kiss it once more, but the favour was refused. They threw me a shift, they took off my stockings, they covered me with a sack, and they led me, with my head and feet uncovered, along the passages. I cried, I called for help; but they had sounded the bell, to give warning that nobody should appear. I invoked Heaven: I sunk to the earth, and they dragged me along. When I had reached the bottom of the stairs, my feet were bloody, my limbs were bruised; my situation would have softened hearts of flint. With large keys, however, they opened the door of a little gloomy subterraneous cell, where they threw me upon a mat half rotted by the damp.

I found there a slice of black bread, and a pitcher of water, with some coarse necessary utensils. The mat, when rolled up, formed a pillow. Upon a stone lay a death's head, and a wooden crucifix. My first impulse was to put a period to my existence. I applied my hands to my throat; I tore my clothes with my teeth; I uttered hideous cries; I howled like a wild beast, I dashed my head against the walls; I covered myself over with blood; I endeavoured to take away my life till my strength failed, which very soon happened. In this place I passed three days; I imagined myself condemned to it for life. Every morning one of my executioners visited me, and said: Obey our Superior, and you shall be liberated from this place.—I have done nothing, I know not what I am required to perform:

Ah!

Ah! Sister Saint Clement, there is a God in heaven.

The third day, about nine o'clock at night, the door was opened by the same nuns who had conducted me to the dungeon. After a panegyric upon the goodness of the Superior, they announced to me her forgiveness, and that they were going to set me at liberty.—It is too late, said I, leave me; here I wish to die.—Nevertheless they raised me up, and dragged me away; they led me back to a cell where I found the Superior. I have consulted God, said she, upon your situation; he has touched my heart; it is his will that I should take pity upon you, and I obey. Fall upon your knees; and ask his pardon.... I fell upon my knees, and said, My God, I entreat your forgiveness for the faults I have committed, as upon the cross you asked forgiveness for me.—What
I 4 presumption!

presumption! exclaimed they; she compares herself to Jesus Christ, and us she compares to the Jews by whom he was crucified.—Do not consider my conduct, said I, but consider yourselves, and judge.—This is not all, said the Superior to me; swear by the sacred obedience you have vowed, that you will not speak of what has happened.—What you have done, then, is certainly very criminal, since you exact from me an oath that I shall never reveal it. None but your own conscience shall ever know it, I swear.—You swear?—Yes, I swear. . . . This being concluded, they stripped me of the clothes they had given me, and left me again to dress myself in my own.

I had been affected by the damps, I was in a critical situation; my whole body was bruised: for some days I had only taken a few drops of water, and a
little

little bread. I imagined that this persecution was to be the last I should have to suffer. From the momentary effect of these violent shocks, which demonstrate the extraordinary power of nature in young persons, I recovered in a very short time; and when I again made my appearance, I found all the community persuaded that I had been sick. I resumed the exercises of the house, and my place at church. I had not forgotten my paper, nor the young sister to whom it had been confided: I was sure that she had not abused the deposit, and that she had not kept it without anxiety. Some days after my liberation from prison, in the choir, at the same moment when I had given it her (that is, when we fall on our knees, and when, inclined towards each other, we disappear in our seats), I felt myself pulled gently by my gown; I stretched out my hand and

and received a billet which contained only these words : “ What terrible anxiety you have occasioned me ! and “ what am I to do with that cruel paper ? ”—After reading this, I twisted it in my hand, and swallowed it. All this happened at the beginning of Lent. The time was approaching when the curiosity of hearing the musical performances attracts to Longchamp all the good and the bad company of Paris. My voice was exceedingly fine, though now a little spoilt. In these religious houses, attention is paid to the most minute circumstances that concern their interests ; I was therefore treated with more attention and indulgence ; I enjoyed a greater portion of liberty. The sisters whom I taught to sing, were allowed to visit me. She to whom I had confided my memorial was of the number. In the hours of recreation
which

which we spent in the garden, I took her aside ; I made her sing ; and while she sung, I addressed her as follows : You have a great many acquaintances, I have none. I do not wish you to expose yourself to the danger of detection ; I should prefer dying here, rather than expose you to the suspicion of having served me. I know, my friend, that it would occasion your ruin without obtaining my deliverance ; and although your ruin could accomplish my safety, I should not accept it at such a price.... Don't speak of that, said she ; what is the service you wish to have done ? — I wish to have that memorial conveyed to some able advocate for consultation, concealing, at the same time, the house from which it comes, and to obtain an answer, which you may put into my hands at church or elsewhere.—But what have you done with my billet ?
said

said she.—Let that give you no uneasiness ; I swallowed it.—You likewise, said she, may keep your mind at ease ; I will attend to your business. You will observe, Sir, that I sung while she spoke to me, and that she sung while I replied, and that music was mingled with our conversation.

She did not fail very soon to keep her word, and she communicated to me the information in our usual manner. Holy week arrived. The concourse of spectators to our *Tenebres* was numerous. I sung so well as to excite those tumultuous and scandalous marks of approbation which are bestowed upon the comedians in your theatres, and which ought never to be heard in the temple of the Lord, especially upon those solemn and awful days devoted to celebrate the memory of the Son nailed to the cross, for the expiation

tion of the sins of the human race. My young pupils were well prepared : some of them had good voices, almost all had expression and taste ; and it seemed that the public had heard them with pleasure, and that the community was satisfied with the success of my cares.

You know, Sir, that upon Maundy Thursday the holy sacrament is transported from the tabernacle in which it is kept, to a particular altar, where it remains till Friday morning. This interval is employed in adoration by the nuns, who repair to the altar successively, two and two. There is a list, which points out to each their hour of adoration. With what pleasure did I read : Sister Saint Susan, and Sister Saint Ursula, from two o'clock in the morning to three ! I repaired to the altar at the appointed hour ; my companion was there. We placed ourselves
together

together upon the steps of the altar ; we prostrated ourselves, we worshipped God for half an hour. At the end of this period, my young friend stretched out her hand to me, and pressing mine, said : Perhaps we shall never enjoy an opportunity of conversing so long, and so freely. God knows the constraint in which we live, and he will forgive us if we share for our own concerns that time which should be wholly dedicated to his service. I have not read the memorial, but it is not difficult to guess its contents. I shall have the answer to it immediately ; but if that answer should encourage you to commence a suit to be enabled to renounce your vows, do you not observe that you must necessarily consult with gentlemen of the law ?—True—That for this purpose liberty is requisite ?—I know.—And that if you act wisely, you will avail yourself
of

of present circumstances to procure it?

—I have reflected upon that subject.—

You will do it then?—I shall consider.

—One thing more: if your business should be opened, you will remain here abandoned to all the fury of the community: have you foreseen the persecutions to which you will be exposed?—

They cannot be more severe than those I have already suffered.—I don't know

that.—Excuse me, they will not dare at first to deprive me of my liberty.—

And why not?—Because I shall be, as it were, placed between the world and the cloister. I shall possess the opportunity to speak, the liberty to complain:

I will summon you all as witnesses:

they will not venture to commit injuries which might furnish me with subject of complaint; they will beware of doing any act which might render odious the cause they maintain. Nothing would

be

be more acceptable to me, than the ill usage they might inflict ; but they will not act in this manner ; be assured, they will pursue a very different course. They will beset me with solicitations, they will represent the injury I am about to do to myself, and to the house ; and depend upon it, they will not recur to menace, but when they discover that mildness and insinuation are employed without success ; and that at all events they will forbear to put in practise any violent measures.—But it is incredible that you can have such an aversion for a situation, the duties of which you perform with so much facility and exactness.—I feel that aversion in my own breast ; it was engraved on my mind at my birth, and it never will be erased. I shall end by being a bad nun, and I must anticipate that moment. But if unfortunately you should

should prove unsuccessful ! If I should prove unsuccessful, I will request liberty to change my house. And if you do not obtain this favour, I will die.—We suffer much before we choose the alternative of death. Ah ! my friend, I shudder at the conduct you pursue ; I tremble lest your vows should be adjudged to be broken, and lest they should not. If they are, what course are you to follow ? what will you do in the world ? You have figure, wit, and talents ; but these, they say, are of little service when they are connected with virtue ; and I know that you will not swerve from the last.—You do justice to me, but not to virtue ; upon it alone I depend ; the less frequently it is to be found among mankind, the more it ought to be valued.—It is praised, but it is neglected.—It is virtue alone, however, that encourages and supports me in my design. Whatever may be

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objected to me, my morals must be respected. Of me at least, it will not be said, as of many others, that I was seduced from the state to which I belonged by a criminal passion. I see nobody, I am acquainted with nobody. I demand my freedom, because the sacrifice of it was not voluntary. Did you read my memorial?—No; I opened the packet you gave me, because it was without direction, and I was induced to think it intended for me; but the first lines undeceived me, and I went no farther. How happily were you inspired with the idea of confiding it to me! a moment later it would have been found upon you.... But the hour which puts an end to our station, approaches. Let us prostrate ourselves, that those who succeed, may find us in the proper situation. Ask of God to enlighten and to guide you; I will unite my prayers and my sighs with yours....

My mind was now a little soothed. My companion prayed in an erect posture, while I prostrated myself, with my forehead leaning upon the lowest step of the altar, and my arms extended upon the upper steps. I do not believe that I ever addressed God with more consolation and fervour. My heart palpitated with violence; in an instant I forgot every thing around me. I am ignorant how long I remained in this position, or how much longer I might have continued; but doubtless I presented a very affecting spectacle to my companion, and the two nuns who arrived at the spot. When I rose, I thought myself alone, I was mistaken; all three were behind me, standing, and bathed in tears. They had not ventured to interrupt me. They waited till I should return to myself from that state of transport and effusion in which I appeared. When I

directed my looks to that side on which they stood, my countenance must doubtless have possessed a very commanding character, if I may judge from the effect which it produced upon them, by the resemblance they told me I bore at that moment to our former Superior, when she used to impart to us spiritual consolation, and by the emotions which my appearance had inspired. Had I felt any bent to hypocrisy, or fanaticism, and had been disposed to play a distinguished part in the house, I have no doubt that I should have succeeded. My soul was easily enflamed, exalted, transported; and a thousand times our good Superior embracing me, has said, that no person would have loved God with an ardour like mine; that I had a heart of flesh, while others had hearts of stone. Certain it is, that that I experienced an extreme facility in
sharing

sharing her extasies. In the prayers which she uttered aloud, it sometimes happened that I would become the speaker, follow the train of her ideas, and catch, as it were from inspiration, a part of what she herself would have said. My companions heard her in silence, or were contented merely to follow, while I interrupted her effusions, soared into a higher flight, and joined my voice to hers in accents of adoration. I very long preserved the impression I had taken, and it seemed as if some part of it was destined to be restored; for it used to be observed of others, that they had conversed with her, while it was perceived of her, that she had conversed with me. But what signifies all this when the call no longer exists?.... The period of our station being expired, we resigned our place to those who succeeded. My young,

companion and I embraced each other very tenderly before we separated.

The scene which had taken place at the altar, excited considerable attention in the house. The success of our *Tenebres* on Good Friday likewise had its share : I sung, I played upon the organ, I was applauded. O giddy Nuns ! I had scarcely any difficulty in reconciling myself to the whole members of the community ; they met me half way, and among the first, the Superior herself. My acquaintance was desired by some people of the world, a circumstance which corresponded too well with my project, to permit me to decline their advances. I was visited by the chief President, Madame de Soubise, and a number of persons of distinction, by monks, by priests, soldiers, magistrates, by pious women, and by ladies of fashion ; and, among the rest, by
that

that kind of bucks you call *Salons Rouges*, whom I quickly dismissed. I cultivated no acquaintances but those which were unexceptionable; the rest I resigned to the nuns, who were not so nice.

I forgot to mention, that the first mark of kindness I received, was my re-establishment in my cell. I had the courage to demand the restoration of the little picture of our former Superior, and they did not venture to refuse the request. It has resumed its place at my breast, where it shall remain as long as I live. Every morning my first care is to raise my soul to God; my second is to kiss the portrait. When I am desirous to pray, and when I feel my heart cold and languid, I take it from my neck, and place it before me. I gaze upon it, and receive inspiration. It is much to be regretted,

K 4

that

that we never were acquainted with the holy persons whose images are exposed to our veneration ; for then they would strike us with very different impressions. They would not allow us to remain at their feet, or in their presence, with those cold and lifeless feelings which we often experience.

I received the answer to my memorial from a M. Manouri, which was neither favourable nor unfavourable. Before pronouncing upon this affair, a great many explanations were required, which it was difficult to furnish without a personal interview. I then declared my name, and invited M. Manouri to come to Longchamp. These gentlemen are not easily drawn from home ; he came however. We had a very long conversation, and adjusted a plan of correspondence, by which he was to convey his questions with safety, and

and I to return my answers. On my side, I employed the whole interval during which he kept my business under consideration, in conciliating favour and kindness, in disposing people to take an interest in my fortune, and in endeavours to obtain protection. . . . I told my name, I disclosed the circumstances of my conduct in the first house in which I had lived, the hardships I had suffered in the house of my parents, the severity with which I had been treated in the convent, my remonstrance at Saint - Mary's, my stay at Longchamp, my taking the habit, my profession, with the cruelties that had been exercised against me after my vows were consummated. My tale was heard with pity and commiseration, and accompanied with offers of assistance: without farther explanation, I reserved the kindness that was expressed

in my favour, for an occasion in which it might be necessary. Nothing transpired in the house. I had obtained permission from Rome to protest against my vows; the action was on the point of being instituted, without the remotest suspicion on the subject being entertained. You may then conceive the surprise of my Superior, when she received the intimation of a protest, in the name of Maria Susan Simonin, against her vows, with a request to be allowed to quit the religious habit, and leave the cloister, and to regulate her future life as she might think proper.

I had readily foreseen that I should experience various kinds of opposition, from the laws, from the religious house to which I belonged, and from the alarm with which my sisters and my brothers-in-law would be seized. Should I regain my freedom, their fortune might be considerably

considerably affected by the claims which it was in my power to advance. I wrote to my sisters, and entreated them to give no opposition to my leaving the convent; I appealed to their conscience to bear witness to the little freedom with which my vows had been made. I offered to renounce, by an authentic instrument, every pretension to the succession of my father and mother. I omitted no argument that could persuade them, that the step I had taken, was dictated neither by interest nor by passion. I was not sanguine in the hopes of inspiring them with sentiments favourable to my design. This instrument which I proposed to make, executed while I yet was under religious engagements, became invalid; and they had too little security that I would ratify it when I recovered my liberty. And, although they had agreed
to

to accept my proposal, in what situation would they have been placed? Would they have left their sister without fortune and without asylum? Would they, in such circumstances, have retained possession of her property? What would they have said to the world in defence of such a conduct? If she come to us to beg support, can we deny her solicitations? If she is desirous to marry, who can tell the situation of the man with whom she may form an alliance? And, if she should have children.....No. We dare not consent. We must oppose with all our might this dangerous attempt.... Such were their reflections; and such were the principles upon which their conduct was founded.

Scarcely had the Superior received my application in legal form, when she ran to my cell. How, Sister Susan! said she to me, you wish to leave us?—

Yes,

Yes, Madam.—And you are going to appeal from your vows?—Yes, Madam.—Have you not acted without constraint?—No, Madam.—And what has constrained you?—Every thing.—Your father?—My father.—Your mother?—The same.—And why did not you remonstrate at the foot of the altar?—I was so little myself, that I do not recollect even having stood by it.—How can you say so?—I speak the truth.—What! did not you hear the priest ask you : Sister, and Susan Simonin, do you promise to God, obedience, chastity, and poverty?—I have no recollection of it.—You did not answer, Yes?—I have no recollection of it.—And you imagine that people will believe this?—They may or may not believe it; but it is not the less true.—My dear child, if such pretences were listened to, what dreadful
abuses

abuses would be the consequence ! You have taken an inconsiderate step; you have suffered yourself to be misled by a revengeful feeling; the chastisements which you have obliged me to inflict upon you, still rankle in your bosom; you think they are sufficient to make you break your vows; you are wrong: it is an excuse which cannot be sustained either by God or man. Consider, that perjury is the greatest of all crimes; that you have already committed it in your heart, and that you are about to consummate it.—I shall not be perjured, I have never been sworn.—If you have suffered some injuries, have they not been repaired?—It is not upon these injuries that I ground my determination.—What is it then?—Upon the want of a call, upon my want of liberty in taking my vows.—If you had no call, if you acted by constraint,

straint,

strait, might not you have said so in time?—And what purpose would it have answered?—Might not you have displayed the same firmness that you did at Saint-Mary's?—Can we be answerable, at all times, for the firmness of our hearts? The first time I was firm; the second time my weakness overcame me.—Might not you have called a lawyer? Might not you have entered a protest? You had four-and-twenty hours, in which you might have shewn proofs of reluctance.—Did I know any thing about these forms? Though I had known them, was I in a state to practise them, was it in my power? What! Madam, were not you yourself sensible of my derangement? Were I to call you as a witness, would you swear that I was sound in mind?—If you call me, I shall swear it!—Well, then, Madam, it is you, and not I, who are perjured.

—My

—My child, you are going to make a very needless noise. Recollect yourself, I conjure you, by your own interest, and that of the house : such affairs are always attended with scandalous discussions.—This will not be my fault.—The people of the world are wicked ; they will make suppositions the most unfavourable respecting your understanding, your heart, and your morals ; they will think.....—whatever they please.—But speak to me ingenuously ; if you have any secret discontent, whatever it be, it is capable of a remedy.—I have been, I am, and I shall be dissatisfied with my condition as long as I live.—Could the seducing spirit, which is continually watching us, and who lies in wait to destroy us, take advantage of the liberty which we have granted you lately, to inspire you with some fatal propensity?—No, Madam ;
you

you know that I never took an oath without reluctance ; I take God to witness, that my heart is innocent, and that it never knew a dishonourable sentiment.—This is inconceivable.—Nothing, Madam, is easier to be conceived. Every one has a character of her own, and I have mine: you love the monastic life, I hate it ; you have the graces of your condition, and I do not possess them; you would be undone in the world, and here you secure your salvation; I shall ruin myself here, and I hope for salvation in the world : I am, and always shall be, a bad nun.—And, wherefore? There is no person who performs her duty better than you.—But it is with pain and reluctance.—You have the greater merit.—No person can know better than I do myself what I merit ; and I am compelled to acknowledge, that in submitting to

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every thing, I merit nothing. I am tired of the profession of a hypocrite : in doing that which is the salvation of others, I render myself an object of detestation and condemnation. In a word, Madam, I know no true nuns but those who are destined so by a taste for retirement, and who would remain here, though they were confined neither by rails nor walls ; I am far from being of this number : my body is here, but my heart is not ; it is roaming at large ; and were I to be under the necessity of choosing between death, and perpetual confinement in the place where I now am, I would not hesitate to die. These are my sentiments.—How ! could you quit, without remorse, this veil, and these vestments, which have consecrated you to Jesus-Christ ?—Yes, Madam ; because I assumed them without reflection, and under constraint..... I replied

replied to her with a great deal of moderation, though it was not what my heart suggested; it said to me: Oh! that the moments were come, when I could tear them off, and cast them away!..... My answer threw her into a state of violent agitation; she turned pale; she wished to speak, but her lips trembled, and she did not know what to say to me. I walked at a quick pace backward and forward across my cell; and she cried out: O, my God! what will our Sisters say! O, Jesus! look down upon her with an eye of pity! Sister Saint-Susan.—Madam?—Is this then the part which you are to act? You mean to disgrace us, to render us the subject of common talk, and to become the object of it yourself; to ruin yourself!—I mean to go out of this place.—But, if it is only the house with which you are displeased,.....—It is the house, it is my

condition, it is the convent ; I will not be confined either here or elsewhere.— Child, you are possessed with the Devil ; it is he who agitates you, who makes you speak so, who distracts you ; it is an absolute truth : see in what a state you are !—In fact, I viewed myself, and I saw that my robe was all in disorder, that my handkerchief was almost turned round, and that my veil was fallen back upon my shoulders. My patience was quite wearied out with the talk of this wicked Superior, who had always spoken to me in a mild deceitful tone ; and I said to her with indignation : No, Madam, no ; I wish no more of this clothing, I'll have no more of it..... In the meanwhile I attempted to adjust my veil ; but, from the tremor of my hands, the more I attempted to put it right, the worse I made it ; till at last, out of all
5 patience,

patience, I seized it with violence, tore it away, and threw it upon the ground; remaining in the presence of my Superior, my forehead girt with a bandeau, and all my hair dishevelled. In doubt whether she ought to stay, she walked about, saying: O Jesus! she is possessed; it is an absolute fact, she is possessed!.....and the hypocrite, at the same time, crossed herself with the cross of her rosary. It was not long before I came to myself; I felt the indecency of my situation, and the imprudence of my discourse; I composed myself, I took up my veil and put it on; then turning to her, I said: Madam, I am neither mad nor possessed; I am ashamed of my violence, and I ask your pardon; but, judge from this circumstance, how ill the religious state becomes me, and how much I am justified in endeavouring to

withdraw from it if I can..... Without attending to me, she repeated: What will the world say? what will our sisters say?—Madam, said I to her, do you wish to avoid an exposure? there is one way of doing it. I do not reclaim my portion, I only ask my liberty. I do not desire you to open the gates to me, but take care only that to-day, to-morrow, or the day after, they may be ill guarded, and don't discover my escape till as late as possible..... Wretch! how dare you make such a proposal as this to me?—It is an advice which a wise and good Superior ought to follow, with respect to those for whom a convent is a prison; and the convent is one to me: if the laws to which I have appealed, disappoint my expectations, and if urged by the pangs of despair, with which I am already but too well acquainted,... you have a well...

well.... There are windows in the house.... There are walls before me.... I have a robe which I can tear in pieces.... I have hands which I can use.... Stop, wretch! you make me tremble. What! you can.....—I can, on failure of the means of putting a sudden end to the evils of life, refuse nourishment: we may eat and drink, or not, as we please.... If it should happen after what I have told you, that I should have the courage, and you know that in this I am not deficient; and that it requires more sometimes to support life than to encounter death; tell me, conceiving yourself at the judgement of God, whether you or I would appear in his sight the most guilty?..... Madam, I desire nothing to be returned, I never will require any thing from the house; only spare me a crime, and spare yourself the cause of

long remorse : let us concert together...

—Do you believe, Sister Saint Susan, that I can fail in my first duty, that I can be a party to crime, that I can take a share in sacrilege !—It is I, Madam, who am guilty of sacrilege every day, in profaning, by contempt, the sacred habit which I wear. Take it from me, I am unworthy of it ; send me out into the village in quest of the rags which cover the poorest peasant ; let the door of the cloister be open for my escape.—And where will you go in order to be better ?—I know not where I shall go ; but evil is confined to those situations, in which God does not intend that we should live ; and God never intended that I should live in this convent.—You have nothing.—True ; but poverty is not what I fear most.—Dread the disorders to which it leads.—The past is my guarantee for the future ; had I wished

wished to listen to criminal solicitations, I should now have been at liberty. But if I am to get out of this house, it shall be either with your consent, or by the authority of the laws. Take your choice.....

This conversation lasted for a considerable time. When I recollected what passed, I blushed at the imprudent and ridiculous things which I had done and said, but it was too late : The Superior was still repeating her exclamations : What will the world say ! what will our sisters say ! when the clock, which summoned us to service, reminded us to séparate. She said to me at parting : Sister Saint-Susan, you are going to church ; pray God to sanctify you, and to give you the spirit of your condition ; ask your conscience, and believe its dictates ; it

is impossible but it must reproach you.
I dispense with your singing.

We went down almost together. Service began; when it was finished, and all the sisters were about to separate, she struck the breviary with her hand, and stopped them. My sisters, said she to them, I desire that you will throw yourselves at the foot of the altar, and implore the mercy of God for a nun whom he has forsaken, who has lost the spirit of devotion, and all taste for the exercises of religion, and who is on the point of committing an action, sacrilegious in the sight of God, and disgraceful in the eyes of man.

I cannot paint to you the general surprise; in an instant, every one, without stirring, looked round at the countenances of her companions, expecting to see the guilty person betrayed

betrayed by her embarrassment. They all prostrated themselves, and prayed in silence. After a pretty considerable space of time, the Superior thundered, in a bass voice, the *Veni Creator*, in which she was followed by the rest, in the same tone; after a second interval of silence, she knocked upon her desk, and and they all went out.

You may easily suppose the murmurs which were created in the community. Who is this? Who is it not? What has she done? What does she intend to do?.... These suspicions were not of long duration. My application was beginning to make a noise in the world; I received endless visits, some bringing me reproaches, others advice; I had the approbation of some, and the censure of others. I had only one way of justifying myself in the view of all, by
informing

informing them of the treatment I had received from my parents ; and you may conceive what management was necessary upon this point ; there were only a few persons who continued sincerely attached to me, beside M. Manouri, to whom I had committed my case, and to whom I had entirely disclosed my sentiments. When I was afraid of the torments with which I was menaced ; and when the dungeon into which I had been once dragged, represented all its horrors to my imagination, (for I already knew the fury of nuns) I communicated my fears to M. Manouri, who said to me : It is impossible for you to avoid every species of punishment, and you must lay your account with them ; all that you can do, is to arm yourself with patience, and to support them in the hopes of their termination. As for the dungeon, I promise you that
you

you shall never return thither : I'll take care of that.... In fact, he brought an order to the Superior, in a few days, to bring me forth as often as she should be required.

Next morning, after service, I was recommended to the public prayers of the community ; they prayed in silence, and repeated the same hymn in a low voice, that they had chanted the preceding night. The same ceremony was performed on the third day, with this difference, that they ordered me to place myself in the middle of the choir, while they recited the prayers for the dying, and the litanies, with *ora pro ea*. The fourth day there occurred a piece of mummary, which strongly remarked the capricious character of the Superior. At the conclusion of the service they made me lie down in a coffin, which was placed in the middle of the choir ; she set candlesticks

sticks by my side, with a pot of holy water; they covered me with a napkin, and recited the service of the dead, after which every nun, in passing, threw some holy water upon me, saying at the same time, *Requiescat in pace*. It is necessary to understand the language of the convent, in order fully to comprehend the sort of menace contained in these last words. Two of the nuns took off the napkin, put out the candles, and left me drenched to the skin with the water which they had maliciously sprinkled upon me. My clothes dried upon me, as I had not any others to change them. This mortification was followed by another. The community was assembled; they considered me as a reprobate; my conduct was treated as apostacy, and all the nuns were prohibited, on pain of disobedience, to speak to me, to assist me,

me, to come near me, or even to touch the things I used. These orders were rigorously executed. Our passages were so narrow, that in some places two persons could scarcely pass abreast. If I met any of the nuns, they either returned, or stood close with their back to the wall, holding their veil and their clothes, for fear they should touch mine. If they had any thing to receive from me, I put it upon the ground, and they took hold of it with a cloth: if they had any thing to give me, they threw it at me. If they were unfortunate enough to touch me, they believed themselves polluted, and they went to confess, and to get absolution from the Superior. It has been said, that flattery is mean and contemptible; it is also extremely cruel, and very ingenious, when it proposes to please by the mortifications which it invents. I was
deprived

deprived of all employment, as unworthy. At church they left a pew empty on each side of that which I occupied. I sat at table alone in the hall; they would not serve me: I was under the necessity of going to the kitchen to ask for my allowance; the first time, sister cook called out to me, Don't come here!..... I obeyed her.—What do you want? —Food—Food! you do not deserve to live.....— Sometimes I returned, and spent the day without nourishment; sometimes I urged my demand, till at last they would place upon the threshold meat which it would have been shameful to have offered to a dog; I wept while I took it up, and went away. If at any time I happened to arrive last at the door of the choir, I found it shut; I knelt down on my knees, and there waited the conclusion of the service. If it was in the garden, I returned to my cell.

cell. My strength however declining from the little nourishment I received, from the bad quality of what I used, and still more from the difficulty with which I endured so many reiterated marks of inhumanity, I felt that if I persisted in suffering without complaint, I should never see my suit brought to a conclusion. I resolved therefore to speak to the Superior. Although half dead with terror; I went and knocked at her door. She opened it, and seeing me, shrunk back several steps, saying: Apostate! be gone.—I withdrew.—Again: . . .—I retired once more.—What do you want?—Since neither God nor man has condemned me to die, I request, Madam, that you would give orders that I should be supplied with the means of supporting life.—Life! said she, repeating the observation of the cook, are you wor-

thy of enjoying that blessing?—God alone knows that; but I warn you, if nourishment is denied me, I shall be compelled to carry my complaints to those who have taken me under their protection. Here I remain only as a deposit; till my fortune and my state be decided.—Begone, said she, do not pollute me with the sight of you, I shall attend to your request.... I went away, and she shut the door after me with violence. She probably gave orders, but I was treated with hardly any more attention. They deemed it a merit to disobey her; they continued to send me the coarsest victuals, and they would even render them more disgusting, by mixing them with ashes, and every species of filth.

Such was the life I led while my suit was pending. I was not entirely discharged from appearing in the parlour; they could

could not deprive me of the liberty of conferring with my judges and with my advocate, although the latter was often obliged to employ threats to obtain an interview with me. Even then I was attended by one of the sisters, who complained if I spoke low, raged if I staid too long; interrupted, contradicted me; gave me the lie; repeated to the Superior my conversation, altered its import and misrepresented its tendency; and perhaps imputed to me language which I had never employed! They even went so far as to rob me; to strip me of every thing I possessed, to carry off my chairs, my coverlets and my quilt. I received no more clean linen; my clothes were in tatters, and I was almost destitute of shoes and stockings. I had the utmost difficulty to procure a little water; often have I myself been

obliged to go and bring it from the well, that well which I have already mentioned : they broke my utensils ; till at last I was obliged to drink the water I had drawn, without the possibility of conveying it to my apartment. If I passed under the windows, I was forced to run, or expose myself to the insults with which I was assailed from the cells. Some of the sisters have even spit in my face. I became careless of my person, to a degree that rendered me hideous. As they were apprehensive of the complaints I might make to our directors, I was prohibited from confession. One great festival day, I believe it was that of the Ascension, they contrived to derange my lock ; I could not appear at mass, and perhaps should have been absent from all the other services, had I not received a visit from M. Manouri, whom they told at
first

first that they knew not what was become of me; that I was no longer to be seen, and that I performed no action which christianity required. After a great deal of trouble, however, I removed the lock of my door, and repaired to the door of the choir, which I found shut, as usually happened when I did not arrive among the first. I had lain down upon the ground, with my head and back leaning against one of the walls, my arms across my breast, while the rest of my body, extended, closed up the passage. When the service ended, and the nuns presented themselves in order to retire, the first stopped short, the rest followed immediately behind her. The Superior suspected the matter, and said, Walk over her, it is nothing but a dead body. . . . Some of them obeyed, and trod upon me; others were less inhu-

man; but none of them ventured to offer their hand to raise me up. During my absence, they had carried off from my cell my little prayer desk, the portrait of our foundress, the rest of the pious images, and the crucifix; I had nothing left, but that which I carried at my rosary, and this too I was not long allowed to preserve; I lived then between four bare walls, in a room without a door, and without a chair to sit down upon; standing or stretched on a pallet of straw, deprived of the most necessary utensils, and therefore compelled to go out by night; while next day I was accused of disturbing the repose of the house, of wandering about, and reproached with having lost my understanding. As my cell was now unlocked, they would enter tumultuously during the night; they shouted, displaced my bed, broke

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broke my windows, and did every thing which could inspire me with affright. The noise seemed to mount up, and then to descend; and those who were not in the plot, said that strange things passed in my apartment; that they had heard dismal sounds, cries, clanking of chains; that I held converse with ghosts and wicked spirits; that I must needs have made a covenant with the devil; and that it was high time to leave the part of the house where I lived. There are in every community, a number of weak heads: they even compose a majority. These believed every word they heard; were afraid to pass my door; their perturbed imagination represented my form to them as hideous and frightful; when they chanced to meet me, they made the sign of the cross, and retired with the utmost speed, crying: Away from me, Satan! My

God, come to my aid ! . . . One of the youngest happening to be at the bottom of the passage, I was advancing to her, and there was no possibility of avoiding me. She was seized with the most terrible fright. First she turned to the wall, muttering in a tremulous tone : My God ! my God ! Jesus ! Mary ! I continued to advance. When she perceived that I was near her, she covered her face with her hands, that she might not see me ; and springing forward, precipitated herself into my arms : and then what cries of mercy ! I am lost ! Sister Saint Susan, do not hurt me ! Sister Saint Susan, have pity upon me ! . . . And with these words down she dropped, half dead, upon the floor. Her cries assembled a number of the sisters ; she was carried away ; and it is impossible for me to describe how this accident was misrepresented. It was converted

verted into an affair of the most criminal nature. It was said that the demon of impurity had taken possession of my soul ; designs and actions, which I cannot name, were imputed to me ; and desires of a strange and extravagant description, to which the disorder the young nun had fallen into, was ascribed. I am not a man indeed, and do not understand the suspicions to which two women, much less a single woman, may be subject ; yet, as my bed had no curtains, and they entered my apartment at all hours, I must confess, Sir, that according to my ideas, with all their seeming reserve, the modesty of their looks, the chastity of their expressions, the hearts of these women must have been greatly corrupted. They knew at least that improper actions were committed by a person in private, of which I was entirely ignorant, and therefore

fore never perfectly comprehended the nature of the accusations under which I laboured; and they expressed themselves in terms so obscure, that I never knew what answer was to be made to their charge. Were I to pursue the detail of my persecutions, my story would never end. Ah! Sir, if you have children of your own, learn from my fate the sufferings you prepare for them, if you permit them to embrace the religious life, without the strongest and most decisive marks of vocation. How unjust, how inconsistent is the conduct of people in the world! A girl is allowed to dispose of her liberty at an age when she would not be allowed to dispose of a guinea. But your daughter to death, rather than imprison her in a cloister against her inclinations; put her to death without hesitation. How often have I wished that my mother had stifled

me

me at my birth ! She then had been less cruel than she was. Could you seriously believe that I was deprived of my breviary, and forbidden to pray to God ? You may well imagine that I did not obey this injunction. Alas, it was the only consolation I possessed. I would raise my hands to heaven ; I breathed the accents of suffering ; and I ventured to hope that they were heard by the only Being who witnessed the whole extent of my misery. They listened at my door ; and one day, when I was addressing myself to God, in the anguish of my heart, and imploring his assistance, they said to me : You implore God in vain, there is no God for you ; die, desperate wretch, and be damned.—Others added. Amen ; such be the lot of the apostate ! Amen, such be hers !

But the following is an incident that you will consider more extraordinary than

than any other. I cannot determine whether it was the effect of malice or of illusion. The circumstance, however, was this. Although no part of my conduct discovered a disordered mind, much less a mind possessed by the infernal spirit, they held a deliberation whether it was not necessary to exorcise me, and, by a plurality of voices, they concluded that I had renounced my chrism and my baptism; that I was possessed by the demon, and that his influence estranged me from divine services. Another added, that at certain prayers I gnashed my teeth, shuddered in the church, and twisted my arms during the elevation of the holy sacrament. According to some, I trampled upon the cross; I no longer carried my rosary (which by the way they had stolen); I uttered blasphemies too dreadful to be repeated. All agreed that
there

there was something unnatural about me, of which the Grand Vicar must be apprised. This was accordingly done.

The Grand Vicar was a M. Hebert, a man of age and experience, blunt in his character, but just and enlightened. He was informed, in full detail, of the disorder which prevailed in the house; and certain it is that it was not inconsiderable, and that if the cause could be imputed to me, it was of a nature perfectly innocent. You may easily imagine, that in the memorial which was laid before him, they did not omit my nocturnal perambulations, my absence from the choir, the tumults, which happened in my apartment, the strange sights which some had seen, the extraordinary sounds which others had heard, my aversion to spiritual exercises, the blasphemies of which I was guilty, and the obscenities with which

I was charged. The adventure of the young nun they represented in any light which their imagination chose to supply. The accusations were so strong, and so numerous, that, with all his good sense, M. Hebert could not help, in some measure, considering them in a serious point of view, and believing that they contained a great deal of truth. The affair appeared to him of so much importance, as to require a personal examination, that he might be able to judge of its real situation. He announced his intended visit, and he actually arrived, accompanied by two young ecclesiastics who had been appointed to attend him, and who relieved him by their assistance in the discharge of the laborious part of the duties he had to fulfil.

A few days before his arrival, I heard a person softly enter my chamber at midnight.

midnight. I remained silent, while I was addressed in a low and tremulous voice : Sister Saint Susan, are you asleep ?—No. Who is there ?—It is I.—Who are you ?—A friend of yours who is overwhelmed with terror, and who exposes herself to ruin to communicate to you a piece of intelligence, from which perhaps you can derive no advantage. Attend ; to-morrow or next day a visit from the Grand Vicar is expected ; you are to be accused ; prepare for your defence. Adieu ; have courage, and God be with you.... Saying this, she glided away with the swiftness of a shadow. You see, there are every where, even in religious houses, hearts of a compassionate disposition, which no circumstances can harden.

All this while, my suit was prosecuted with vigour. Crowds of people
of

of every situation, of both sexes; and all conditions; with whom I was unacquainted, interested themselves in my fortune, and solicited in my favour. You were of this number; and perhaps you are better acquainted than I am with the history of my cause, for at last I was not permitted to converse with M. Manouri. He was told that I was sick. He suspected that they meant to deceive him; he trembled lest they had thrown me into the dungeon. He applied to the Archbishop's court; but they did not even deign to give him a hearing; they had been prepossessed with the idea that I was mad, or something worse. He had recourse to the interposition of the civil court, and insisted upon the execution of the order intimated to the Superior; to present me, dead or alive, when she was summoned to that effect. The secular Judges encroached upon the functions;

functions of the ecclesiastical courts. The latter were aware of the consequences which this incident might produce, if they failed to obviate the cause; and this, in all probability, accelerated the visit of the Grand Vicar; for these gentlemen, harassed by the eternal broils of the convent, are very unwilling to interfere, because they know by experience, that their authority is always eluded and despised.

I availed myself of the advice of my friend, to implore the assistance of God to collect my spirits, and to prepare for my defence. Of heaven, I only entreated the happiness of being interrogated and heard with impartiality; I obtained this request; but I am now to inform you at what price. If it was my interest to appear to the Judge innocent and rational, it was of no less importance to the Superior that I should

be considered vicious, guilty, distracted, possessed by the infernal spirit. Accordingly, in proportion as I redoubled the fervour of prayers and the exercises of devotion, they redoubled the mischievous tricks with which I was tormented. I received no nourishment but what was barely necessary to prevent my dying of hunger; I was harassed and exhausted with mortifications; terrors of every kind were multiplied around me; of the refreshment of sleep I was utterly deprived. They put in practice every thing which could destroy my health and derange my mind. They exercised a refinement of cruelty, of which you can form no idea. Judge of the rest from the following instance. One day, when I was going from my cell to church, or elsewhere, I saw a pair of tongs upon the ground across the passage. I stooped to take them up,
and

and place them in such a manner, that they might easily be found by the person who had mislaid them. The light prevented me from observing that they were almost red ; I took hold of them, but in dropping them again, they carried along with them, all the skin of the inside of my hand. In the places through which I had to pass, they continued to throw in my way something or other, either to catch my feet, or to strike my head. An hundred times have I been wounded severely ; I wonder how I escaped with my life. I was not allowed any light to direct me, and I was obliged to proceed trembling, with my hands before me, groping the way. They used to scatter broken glass under my feet. I was fully determined to disclose all these circumstances, and I pretty exactly kept my word. I often found the doors of the conveniencies shut, and

was compelled to descend several stories, and run to the bottom of the garden, when I found the door open ; and when I did not. . . . Ah ! Sir, what malicious creatures are these recluse women, who know well that they second the hatred of their Superior, and who imagine that they serve God, by tormenting you to death ! The time was now arrived, when the visit of the Arch-deacon was to take place ; the time was now come when my suit was to be terminated.

In reality, this was the most terrible moment of my whole life ; for consider, Sir, that I was absolutely ignorant of the colours under which I had been represented to this ecclesiastic, and that he came with the curiosity of seeing a girl possessed by the infernal spirit, or counterfeiting that situation. My persecutors imagined, that nothing but a violent

violent fright could display me under this appearance, and they adopted the following method to effect their purpose.

Upon the day the visit was expected, the Superior entered my room very early in the morning, accompanied by three sisters, one carrying a vessel of holy water, the other a crucifix, the third a bundle of cords. The Superior said to me in a harsh and threatening tone: Rise..... I rose.—Kneel down upon your knees and recommend yourself to God.—Madam, said I, before I obey your command, may I ask you what is to be my fate? what are the sufferings to which you have doomed me? and what requests I ought to address to God?.... A cold perspiration overspread my body, I trembled, I felt my knees sink under me, I gazed with fright upon her three fatal companions.

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They were standing in a row, with gloomy ill-boding countenances, their lips close, and their eyes shut. Terror had disconnected every word of the question I asked ; from the silence which they preserved , I imagined that I had not been understood. Again I began to repeat the last words of the question , for I had not courage to go over the whole ; in a feeble and half-extinguished voice I then said : What petition must I address to God ?... They replied : Implore his forgiveness for all the sins you have committed in the course of your life ; address him in the same manner as if you were about to appear before him..... At these words I believed that they had determined upon my destruction. I had heard, indeed, that similar practices sometimes occurred in the convents of certain religious orders of your sex,

sex; that they tried, condemned to death, and consigned to punishment. I never had conceived, however, that this inhuman jurisdiction was exercised in any convent of women; but there were many other things which never entered my imagination, that were there practised. At the idea of immediate death I felt an inclination to cry, but my mouth opened, and no sound could I utter. I advanced to the Superior in a suppliant posture, but my body refused its service, and I sunk backwards. I fell; but my fall was not severe. At these moments, when our strength forsakes us, when we swoon away, the members drop insensibly from each other; they, as it were, weigh each other down; and nature, unable to support herself, seems anxious to prepare a gentle fall for her wearied powers. I lost all sense and feeling; I

only heard around me a burst of confused and distant voices, either of persons speaking, or which arose from the ringing in my ears; I distinguished nothing but this ringing, which continued. I am ignorant how long I remained in this situation, but I was recovered from it by a sudden sensation of cold, which occasioned a slight convulsion, and drew from me a deep sigh. I was immersed in water, which streamed from my clothes to the ground; it was the contents of a large vessel of holy water, which they had dashed over my body. I lay upon my side, stretched out in this water, with my head leaning against the wall; my mouth half open, my eyes almost set, and quite closed. I endeavoured to open them, and to look at objects; but it seemed to me as if I had been enveloped in a thick atmosphere, through

which

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which I discovered nothing but a floating robe, on which I attempted to lay hold, but without success. I made an effort with the arm which was at liberty (upon the other I was supported) ; I attempted to raise it, but it was too heavy ; my extreme weakness subsided by degrees ; I raised myself up, leaning my back against the wall, my two hands immersed in the water, my head reclining upon my breast. In this situation I uttered a deep-drawn note of complaint, in faltering broken accents, rendered inarticulate by the pressure under which I struggled. These women gazed on me with an expression of countenance, that displayed a rigour so invincible, and an inflexibility so obdurate, as left me no courage to solicit their compassion. The Superior said : Place her upright..... They took me by the arms, and raised me up. The Superior

perior added : Since she will not recommend herself to God, so much the worse for her ; you know what you have to do, complete your task.... I imagined that the cords they had brought along with them were intended to strangle me ; I looked at them, while the tears started into my eyes. I craved permission to kiss the crucifix, but my request was refused. I asked leave to kiss the cords, which were immediately presented : I leaned forward, took the Superior's scapulary, kissed it, and said : My God, have compassion upon me ! my God, have compassion upon me ! Dear sisters, endeavour to spare me unnecessary pain..... I then presented my neck. It is impossible for me to describe the state into which I sunk, or in what manner they now treated me ; certain it is, that persons who are conducted to punishment, and
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such was my situation, are dead before they are executed. When I recovered the use of my senses, I found myself seated upon the pallet of straw which formed my bed, my hands tied behind my back, with a large iron cross upon my knees..... I see, Sir, at this distance, all the trouble which I occasion you; but you expressed a wish to know whether I in any degree deserved the compassion which I expect from your goodness.

It was at this time that I experienced the superiority of christianity above all the religions in the world, and discovered the profound wisdom contained in what blind philosophy calls the foolishness of the cross. In the situation in which I was placed, what consolation could I have derived from the contemplation of a fortunate legislator, covered with glory? I set before me him that was
without

without offence, crowned with thorns, his hands and feet pierced with nails, and expiring in agonies. I then would say to myself: Behold the situation of my God, and dare I complain? . . . I dwelt upon this idea, and I felt consolation springing up again in my heart. I knew the vanity of life, and I thought myself too happy to lose it before I had time to multiply my transgressions. Yet I reckoned my years, and found that I was hardly nineteen years of age, and I sighed. I was too much weakened, too much depressed, to allow my mind to rise superior to the terrors of death. In perfect health, I believe that I should have been able to take my resolution with greater fortitude.

In the mean time, the Superior and her satellites returned, and found me possessed of greater presence of mind than they expected, and than they would
have

have wished. They raised me up ; they put on my veil ; two of them supported me under the arms, a third pushed me from behind, and the Superior ordered me to walk. I went without knowing whither I was going ; under the apprehension, however, that I was about to be punished, I said : My God, have pity upon me ! My God, support me ! My God, do not forsake me ! Pardon me, my God, if I have offended thee !

I entered the church. The Grand Vicar had celebrated mass, the community was assembled. I forgot to tell you, that when I had got the length of the church door, the three nuns who had the charge of me, seized me fast, pushed me with violence, and seemed to struggle about me ; those who held my arms dragging me on, while the rest, who were behind, kept me back,
as

as if I had been resisting, and shewing signs of repugnance to enter the church, which was by no means the case. They conducted me to the steps of the altar; I had scarce ascended them, when they pulled me down upon my knees, as if I had refused to kneel; they held me as if I had an intention of making my escape. They chanted the *Veni Creator*, laid out the holy sacrament, and pronounced the blessing. At that part of the blessing, where they testify veneration by an inclination of the body, those who held my arms affected to use compulsion in making me bow, and the rest leaned their hands upon my shoulders. I was sensible of all these various movements, but it was impossible for me to devise their object; soon after however, every thing was developed.

After the blessing, the Grand Vicar divested himself of his chasuble, put
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on his albe and his stote, and advanced towards the steps of the altar, where I was upon my knees; he was between two ecclesiastics, with his back turned upon the altar, upon which the holy sacrament was laid out, and his face directed to my quarter. He approached me, and said: Sister Susan, rise. . . . The sisters who held me suddenly raised me up; others came round me, and seized me by the middle, as if they were afraid lest I should make my escape. He added, Let her be untied. . . They did not obey, but pretended to be aware of the inconvenience or danger of setting me at liberty; but I have told you that this was a spirited man; and he repeated, in a firm and severe tone, Let her be untied. . . . They obeyed. Scarcely were my hands at liberty, when I uttered a woeful piercing cry, which made him turn pale, and the hypocritical

hypocritical nuns, who were about me, run away as if affrighted. He recovered himself; the sisters returned with trembling steps; I remained motionless, and he said to me, What ails you? I made no reply, but shewed him my two arms; the cord with which they had bound me had entered almost entirely into the flesh, and the blood, which had been prevented from circulating, and which was now extravasated, gave them a purple hue; he conceived that my cry arose from the sudden affection occasioned by the blood resuming its course. He said, Let her veil be taken off. They had stitched it in several places without my knowledge, which rendered this a more difficult and violent operation than it would otherwise have been: it behoved the priest to see me beset, possessed, or mad; in the mean while, from

from the force employed in tearing it off, the threads gave way in some places, and the veil, or my habit being rent in others, he had an opportunity of seeing me. I had an interesting figure; deep sorrow had altered, but not destroyed its character; the tones of my voice were pathetic, and they were sensible that my expression was undissembled. The union of these qualities made a strong impression of pity upon the young attendants of the Archdeacon; as for him, he was entirely ignorant of such sentiments; just, but possessed of little susceptibility, he was one of those who have the misfortune to be born to practise virtue, without experiencing any pleasure in it; they do good from a principle of fitness, as they call it. He took the sleeve of his stole, and putting it upon my head, he said to me: Sister Susan, do you believe in God, the Father,

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ther, Son, and Holy Spirit?—I replied : I do.—Do you believe in the holy church our mother?—I do.—Do you renounce Satan and his works?—Instead of answering, I moved suddenly forward, and cried out, and his stole fell off my head. He was troubled, his companions turned pale; some of the sisters ran away, others of them, who were in their stalls, left them in the greatest confusion. He made a signal to them to compose themselves; he looked earnestly at me, expecting something extraordinary to take place. He took courage on my saying to him, Sir, it is nothing; it was one of these nuns who pricked me with something sharp; and, raising my eyes and my hands to heaven, while I shed a flood of tears, I added: It is because they hurt me at the very moment when you asked me if I renounced Satan

Satan and his works; their reason for which I well know..... They all protested, in the voice of the Superior, that they had not touched me. The Arch-deacon replaced his stole upon my head, and the nuns were again drawing near, but he made a signal to them to keep at a distance; and he repeated the question to me, if I renounced Satan and his works, to which I replied with firmness: I renounce them, I renounce them..... He made them bring a Christ, which he presented to me to kiss; and I kissed it upon the feet, upon the hands, and upon the wound in the side. He commanded me to worship it in a loud voice; I fell upon the earth, and upon my knees I said: "My God, my Saviour, thou who diedst upon the cross for my sins, and those of the human race, I adore thee; apply to me the merits of those torments
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“ which thou enduredst ; touch me
“ with a drop of that precious blood
“ which thou hast shed, and I shall be
“ purified. Pardon me, my God, as
“ I pardon my enemies,....” He then
said to me, Make a deed of faith...,
and I made it. Make a deed of love...,
and I made it. Make a deed of hope...,
and I made it. Make a deed of cha-
rity.... and I made it. I do not re-
collect the terms in which they were
conceived, but I think they must have
been pathetic, for I drew sighs from
some of the nuns, and two of the
young ecclesiastics shed tears : the
Archdeacon asked me, with astonish-
ment, where I got the prayers which I
had just now recited. I said, They
come from the bottom of my heart, and
I take God to witness, who hears
every thing, and who is present at this
altar, that they are my thoughts and
5. sentiments,

sentiments. I am a christian, I am innocent; if I have been guilty of some faults, God only knows them, and none but he has a right to ask for an account of them, or to punish them.... When I uttered these words, he cast a terrible look upon the Superior.

The rest of the ceremony being finished, in which the Majesty of God was insulted, things the most sacred profaned, and the minister of the church rendered ridiculous; all the nuns retired, except the Superior, who remained with me and the young ecclesiastics. The Archdeacon sat down, and taking out a memorial which they had presented to him against me, he read it aloud, and questioned me upon the articles which it contained. Why, said he to me, don't you confess?—Because they will not permit me.—Why don't you attend at the sacraments?—Because

they will not permit me.—Why don't you assist at Mass, and at divine service?—Because they will not permit me. Here the Superior wished to speak, but he said to her in the same tone, Be silent, Madam. . . . Why do you go out of your cell at night?—Because they have deprived me of water and every necessary accommodation.—How comes there to be a noise in your bed-room, and in your cell?—Because they will not allow me to take repose. Here the Superior attempted a second time to speak, and he said to her, Madam, I have told you to be silent; you will have an opportunity of answering when I interrogate you. . . . How happened it that they were obliged to extricate a nun from your hands, whom they found thrown down in the passage?—It is the consequence of the horror at me, with which
5 they

they had inspired her. — Is she your friend? — No, Sir. — Were you never in her cell? — Never. — Did you never do any thing improper, either to her, or to others? — Never. — Why did they bind you? — I don't know. — Why is not the door of your cell shut? — Because I have broken the lock. — Why did you break the lock? — To get out, in order to assist at service on the ascension-day. — You were at church then on that day? — Yes, Sir... — The Superior said, Sir, it is not true, all the community... I interrupted her I will testify that the door of the choir was shut; that they found me prostrated at this door, and that you ordered them to trample upon me, which some of them did; but I forgive them, and you Madam, for having ordered them; I am not come to accuse any person, but to defend myself. — Why have you nei-

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ther,

ther a rosary, nor a crucifix?—Because they have taken them from me.—Where is your breviary?—They have taken that also.—How can you pray then?—I pray from the heart, though they have prohibited me from doing it.—Who is it that issued the prohibition?—Madam. . . . Here the Superior was still going to speak. Madam, said he to her, is it true or false, that you have prohibited her from praying? Say yes, or no.—I believed, and I had reason to believe. . . .—This is not to the purpose; have you prohibited her from praying; Yes, or No?—I have prohibited her, but. . . .—She was about to continue, when the Archdeacon resumed; But Sister Susan, how come your feet to be naked?—Because they will not furnish me either with stockings or shoes.—Why are your linen and your clothes so old and dirty?—Because they

they have refused me linen for more than three months, and I am obliged to sleep in my clothes.---Why do you sleep in your clothes?---Because I have neither curtains, mattrass, blankets, sheets, nor night dress.---Why have not you them?---Because they have taken them from me.---Do you get food? ---I ask for it.---You don't get it then? ---I was silent, and he added, It is incredible that they can have used you with so much severity, without your having committed some fault to merit it.---My fault is having no call to the religious state, and recalling my vows, which I never made voluntarily.---It is for the laws to decide upon this affair; and however they may pronounce upon it, it is incumbent on you in the mean time to discharge the duties of the religious life.---No person, Sir, is more punctual than I am.---You must share
the

the lot of all your companions.—That is all I ask.---Have you no complaint to make against any one ?---No, Sir ; I have told you, that I am not come here as an accuser, but for the purpose of defending myself.---Go away.---Where shall I go, Sir ?---To your cell.---I took a few steps and then returned, and prostrated myself at the feet of the Superior, and of the Archdeacon. Well, said he to me, what is the matter ?---I said to him, You see ! shewing him at the same time, my head bruised in several places, my feet bloody, my arms livid, and without flesh ; my clothes dirty and torn.

I think I hear you, Mr. Marquis, and most of those who read these Memoirs, say, “ Horrors so multiplied, “ so varied, so continued ; a series of “ atrocities so monstrous engendered in “ the hearts of nuns ! it is not very probable... “ bable...”

“ bable. . . !” I grant it, but it is true ; and may Heaven, which I now call to witness, judge me with the utmost rigour, and doom me to eternal fire, if I have suffered calumny to darken one of my lines with its slightest shade ! Though I have long experienced how much the aversion of a Superior can stimulate her natural perversity, particularly when it is such as to make a merit of crime, and to applaud and to boast of guilt, resentment shall never prevent me from being just. The more I reflect, the more I am persuaded, that what has happened to me, never did happen, and perhaps never will happen to another. Once, (and God grant the first time may be the last !) Providence, whose views are unknown to us, has been pleased to heap upon a single unfortunate individual, all the mass of cruelties, divided in its inscrutable

table decrees among an infinite multitude who have preceded, and who shall succeed her in the cloister. I have suffered, I have suffered much ; but the lot of my persecutors seems still more deplorable than mine. I would rather, I would much rather die, than give up my situation, on condition of accepting theirs. My pains will be brought to a conclusion, I hope, by the exertion of your goodness : the remembrance, shame, and remorse of crime, will live with them till their latest hour. They now reproach themselves ; without doubt, they will reproach themselves as long as they live, and terror will descend with them to the tomb : in the mean time, Mr. Marquis, my present situation is deplorable : life is committed to me as a charge ; I am a woman ; I am subject to the weakness that is common to my sex ;

sex; God may abandon me: I feel that I have neither strength nor courage long to bear up under what I have hitherto supported. Mr. Marquis, dread lest the fatal moment arrives when you shall weep over my destiny, when you shall be harrowed with remorse. I shall not return from the abyss into which I shall have fallen, and which will be for ever shut upon me.

Retire, said the Archdeacon to me. One of the ecclesiastics presented his hand to raise me up, and the Archdeacon continued: I have heard you, I am now about to hear your Superior, and I will not leave this place till order is re-established. . . . , I withdrew. I found the rest of the house in alarm; all the nuns were at the doors of their cells, conversing across the passage. As soon as I appeared, they retired, and their doors, which they shut with violence,

lence, one after the other, resounded loudly through the mansion. I entered my cell. I dropped upon my knees against the wall, and prayed God to consider the moderation with which I had spoken to the Archdeacon, and to impress his mind with a conviction of my innocence, and of the truth.

I was engaged in prayer, when the Archdeacon, his two companions, and the Superior, entered my cell. I have mentioned that I had neither prayer-desk, tapestry, chairs, curtains, mattress, sheets, utensils; lock to my door, nor hardly a single whole pane of glass in my windows. I rose; and the Archdeacon, stopping short and turning to the Superior, with eyes full of indignation, said: Well, now Madam?—She replied, I was ignorant of this.—You were ignorant of it! it is false; have you passed a single day without visiting
this

this apartment? and do you not descend to your own chamber after you have been here? Sister Susan, speak; was not Madam the Superior here to-day?—I made no answer, he did not urge me; but the young ecclesiastics, dropping their arms, with their heads reclined, and their eyes fixed upon the ground, discovered their surprise and their distress. They all went out together; and I heard the Archdeacon say to the Superior in the passage, You are unworthy of the office which you fill; you ought to be deposed. All this disorder must be repaired before I quit this house; and, shaking his head as he walked along he added, This is horrible—Christians indeed! nuns! human beings! it is horrible!

After this, I heard no more of the subject; but I was supplied with linen, and other articles of dress; with curtains,

tains, sheets, blankets, furniture; my breviary, my books of devotion, my rosary, my crucifix, were restored; my windows were repaired; in short, I received every thing necessary to my accommodation, as other nuns. I was again admitted to the parlour, but only when my business required.

My suit proceeded with little success. M. Manouri published his first memorial, which excited little interest. It contained too much wit, too little of the pathetic, and scarcely any argument. Yet the fault must not altogether be charged to this able lawyer. I absolutely would not consent that he should attack the reputation of my parents; I required that he should forbear to scandalize the religious order, and especially the house in which I lived; I desired that he would not represent my sisters and my brothers-in-law in too odious colours,

lours. In my favour I had only the first protestation I had made, a solemn one indeed, but taken in the first convent, and in no shape renewed since that period. When such narrow limits are assigned to a defence, against those who assume the utmost latitude of attack, who trample without distinction upon what is just and what is unjust, who assert and deny with the same impudence; who are deterred by no blush of shame in the imputations which they charge, the suspicions they insinuate, the slander and the calumny which they invent; it is difficult to come off victorious in the contest, especially before courts, where the habits of business, and the irksomeness which practice is apt to produce, almost always preclude a scrupulous examination, even in matters of the highest importance; where disputes like mine too are always

regarded with an unfavourable eye by the politician, who dreads that upon the success of one nun reclaiming against her vows, an infinite number of others might be induced to prosecute a similar measure. They are conscious of a secret feeling, that if the prison doors were allowed to be thrown open, to restore an unfortunate inhabitant to liberty, the crowd would be stimulated by the precedent to attempt to burst them asunder by force. The prevailing policy is, to discourage similar proceedings, and, by the difficulty of a change in our situation, to induce us to be resigned to our fate. It appears to me, however, that in a well-regulated state, a course directly the reverse ought to be followed; the religious life ought to be rendered difficult to enter, and easy to abandon. And why ought not this case to be placed

placed upon the same footing with so many others, where the smallest defect of formality invalidates the proceedings, though in other respects just? Are convents then so essential to the constitution of a state? Did Jesus Christ institute the orders of monks and nuns? Is it absolutely impossible for the church to dispense with these appendages? What need has the bridegroom of so many foolish virgins, and the human species of so many victims? Will the necessity never be felt of narrowing the mouth of those abysses, into which future races of mankind are about to plunge and be destroyed? Are all the hackneyed rounds of devotion performed within their walls worth a single farthing which pity bestows upon the poor? Does God, who created man a social being, approve his seclusion? Can God, who formed him

frail and inconstant, authorize the temerity of his vows? Can those vows which outrage the general propensity of nature, be even well observed, except by a few ill-constructed beings, in whom the germs of the passions are injured, and who properly should be referred to the class of monsters, if our knowledge permitted us to discern with equal facility the internal structure of man, as to perceive his outward form? Are all those gloomy ceremonies that are observed on the taking of the habit, and at the time of profession, when a man or a woman is devoted to the monastic life, and to misery—have they the power of suspending the animal functions? On the contrary, do they not awake amid silence, constraint and sloth, with a violence unknown to those who live in the world, whose attention is varied and occupied by the number of objects which

which

which occur? Where is it that we behold the imagination haunted by impure phantoms, which pursue and agitate the mind? Where is it that we discover that profound discontent, that pallid look, that meagre countenance, those symptoms of wasting, declining nature? Where do you observe nights consumed in groans, days spent in melancholy, for which no cause can be assigned, followed by tears for which no reason can be found? Where does it occur, that nature, outraged by a constraint for which she is not formed, breaks down every obstacle by which she is opposed, becomes furious, and throws the animal economy into a disorder for which no remedy can be found? In what place have peevishness and discontent erased every social quality? In what society is it that there exists none of the endearing relations of
P 3 father,

father, brother, sister, parent, friend? In what situation is it that man, considering himself only a being that appears for a moment and passes on, treats the sweetest ties by which mortals are united, as a traveller views the objects that fall in his way—without interest, without attachment? Where is the region which hatred, and spleen, and vapours inhabit? Where do you meet with animosity that is never extinguished? Where do the passions brood in silence? Where do you place the abode of cruelty, and of curiosity? The history of these asylums is unknown, said M. Manouri, in his *Plaidoyer*, it is unknown.

A young lady asked permission of her parents to enter into the order of Ursulines. Her father said that he would consent, but that he gave her three years to consider of it. This condition

condition appeared severe to a young person full of fervour ; nevertheless, it was necessary to submit. This period elapsed ; and her call not being proved to be fallacious, she returned to her father, and told him that the three years had expired. Very well, my child, replied he, I allowed you a trial of three years ; I hope you will be so good as to allow me as many to form my resolution.... This conduct appeared still much more severe, tears were shed upon the occasion ; but the father was a man of firmness, who persevered in his purpose. At the end of these six years, she entered and made profession. She was a good nun ; simple, pious, exact in all her duties ; but it happened that the directors abused her frankness, to obtain information of what passed in the house. Her Superiors suspected the truth. She was confined

and deprived of religious exercises, in consequence of which she became mad. And how is it possible that any mind could withstand the persecutions of fifty persons, busy from morning till night in tormenting you? They had previously spread a snare for the girl's mother, which strikingly displays the avarice of the Superiors. They were at pains to inspire the mother of this recluse, with the desire of entering the house, and visiting the cell of her daughter. She applied to the Grand Vicars, who granted her the favour she solicited. She entered, and flew to the cell of her daughter; but what was her astonishment, to see nothing but four bare walls! Every thing had been carried away. They had suspected that this tender and feeling mother would not allow her daughter to live in this situation; and in reality she furnished

it anew, supplied her with a stock of clothes and linen, protesting seriously to the nuns, that this curiosity cost her too dear to be repeated a second time; and that three or four visits a year like this, would ruin her brothers and sisters. . . . It is in these receptacles that ambition and pride sacrifice a part of a family to improve the fortunes of the rest: these are the common sewers into which the refuse of society are thrown. How many mothers are there like mine, who expiate a secret crime by the commission of another!

M. Manouri published a second memorial, which produced a little more effect. The suit was prosecuted vigorously. I again proposed to my sisters to leave them the entire and peaceable possession of the succession of my parents. There was one time at which my suit took the most favourable turn,
and

and when I entertained hopes of regaining my liberty. This glimpse of good fortune served, however, only the more cruelly to deceive me. My cause was pleaded at a public hearing, and lost. The whole community was apprised of the event, while I remained ignorant of it. What agitation, what tumult, what joy were displayed! Little secret clubs were held; they went backwards and forwards to the Superior's apartment, and the nuns to each other's cells. I trembled all over; I could neither leave my cell nor remain in it. I had no friend into whose arms I could run and throw myself. O what a cruel morning is that, when an important suit is to be decided! I wished to pray, but could not; I knelt down, I collected my thoughts, and began to repeat an orison; but in a moment my mind was transported,
in

in spite of myself, to the Court. I saw the Judges, I heard the advocates, I addressed myself to them ; I interrupted my own counsel, and thought my cause poorly defended. I knew none of the Judges ; yet I figured to myself images of them, of every character, some favourable, others hostile, a third party indifferent. I was in an agitation, in a flutter of ideas which it is impossible to conceive.—The noise I had heard was succeeded by a profound silence. The talk among the nuns ceased. I thought that in the choir their voices were unusually low, at least those who sung ; some of them did not sing at all. When service was over, they retired in silence. I imagined that they were as much disquieted by the expectation of the event as I was ; but about mid-day the noise and bustle suddenly revived on every side.

I heard doors open and shut, nuns going backwards and forwards, and the hollow murmurs of persons whispering. I applied my ear to the key-hole ; but it seemed to me that they were silent, and, as they passed, walked upon tip-toe. I conceived a presentiment that I had lost my cause. I no longer doubted it a moment. I paced round my cell without saying a word, my voice was stifled ; I was unable to utter a complaint ; I raised my hands to heaven. I leant sometimes upon one side of the wall, sometimes upon the other. I attempted to repose upon my bed, but was prevented by the violent beating of my heart ; and certain it is, that I heard it beat, and that it even raised my clothes. I was in this situation when I received a message, that a person wished to see me. I went down stairs. I durst not advance.

She

She who delivered me the message was so gay, that I thought the news I had to receive must necessarily be very sad ; however I went. When I reached the parlour-door, I stopped short, and threw myself into a corner between two walls. I was unable to support myself, yet I entered. Nobody was there—I waited. The person who called for me was prevented from appearing till I arrived. They suspected very strongly that he was a messenger from my advocate, they wished therefore to know what passed between us, and they assembled to listen. When he made his appearance, I was sitting with my head reclining upon my arm, and leaning upon the bars of the grate.—I come from M. Manouri, said he.—To inform me replied I, that I have lost my cause?—I don't know any thing of that, Madam ; but he gave me this letter. He seemed
grieved

grieved when he gave it me, and I have come here full speed, as he desired.—Give it me....—He presented the letter, which I took without stirring; and without looking at him, I put it upon my knees, and continued in my former posture. The man, however, asked me, Is there no answer?—No, said I, go.... He went away, and I continued still in the same posture, unable either to move, or to summon resolution to leave the place.

It is a rule in the convent, that you can neither write, nor receive letters, without the Superior's permission; and those you write, as well as those you receive, are submitted to her inspection. I was therefore obliged to carry her mine. For this purpose, I rose and proceeded to her apartment, I thought I should never have reached it; a prisoner who leaves his dungeon to hear
his

his sentence of condemnation pronounced, could not have walked either more slowly or more dejectedly. At length I arrived at her door. The nuns surveyed me at a distance, they were unwilling to lose the smallest circumstance of the spectacle of my sorrow, and my humiliation. I knocked at the door, which was opened. The Superior was within, along with some other nuns. This I perceived by the skirts of their robes, for I never had courage to raise my eyes. I presented my letter with a trembling hand. She took it from me, read it, and again put it into my hands. I returned to my cell, threw myself on the bed, the letter beside me; where I remained without reading it, without rising to go to dinner, without stirring till the afternoon service. At half past three the clock warned me to go down. Some
nuns

nuns had already assembled: the Superior was at the entrance of the choir; she stopped me, and commanded me to kneel behind the door upon the outside; the rest of the community arrived, and the door was shut. After service, they all went out; I allowed them to pass me, then rose, and followed last in the train. From this moment I began to condemn myself to endure whatever they were pleased to inflict. I was discharged from appearing at church, and I voluntarily forbore going to the hall, or to enjoy recreation. I viewed my situation in every way, and I discovered no resource but in submission, and in the necessity which they felt of employing my talents. I should have been contented with that kind of oblivion, in which for several days they allowed me to remain. The visits of different persons were announced; but
that

that of M. Manouri was the only one which I was permitted to receive. When I entered the parlour, I found him precisely in the situation in which I was when his messenger was introduced to me ; his head reclining upon his hands, and leaning upon the grate. I recognised him, but said nothing. He was afraid either to look at me or to speak. Madam, said he at last, without changing his posture, I wrote to you ; did you receive my letter ? — I received it, but have not read it. — You don't know then... — I know all, I conjectured what was my fate, and I have met it with resignation. — How are you treated ? — They have not yet begun to think of me, but I learn from the past, what I must expect in future. I have only one consolation, that deprived of the hope by which I was supported, it is impossible for me to en-

dure so much as I have already suffered; death will put a period to my misfortunes. The fault which I have committed, is one which in religious houses is never forgiven. I do not ask of God to soften the hearts of those, to whose discretion he has been pleased to abandon me, but I implore him to grant me strength to enable me to support my sufferings, to save me from despair, and speedily to call me to himself.—Madam, said he, weeping, had you been my own sister, I could have done no more..... This man's heart overflows with sensibility. Madam, continued he, if in any respect it is in my power to be useful to you, command my service. I shall visit the chief president, whose good opinion I enjoy; I shall likewise wait upon the Grand Vicars and the Archbishop.—Sir, do not give yourself the trouble to speak to
any

any one upon the subject; it is all over.—
But if it were possible to obtain permission for you to change your house?—It is attended with too many obstacles.—
But, pray what then are these obstacles?—The difficulty of obtaining permission, the necessity of depositing a new dowry, or of withdrawing the former one from this house; and, besides, what should I find in another convent? that inflexibility which characterises my heart, would still accompany me. I should meet with Superiors equally pitiless, and nuns equally unkind; as here. I should have the same duties to perform, and the same sufferings to endure. It is better that I should end my days in this place; at least the period of my misery will be less tedious.—Madam, you have interested in your favour many worthy persons, most of them are opulent;

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lent; here your departure will not be opposed, if you carry nothing along with you.—I believe so.—The death, or the departure of a nun, conduces to the interest of those who remain.—But those people of worth, those opulent people you mention, think no more of me, and you will find them very cold, when you propose to furnish me with a dowry at their expence. Why do you imagine that people of the world are more ready to contribute to rescue from the cloister a nun who has no call for the religious life, than pious persons are to introduce into the convent those who are really called to embrace that situation? Do the latter easily procure a dowry? Alas, Sir, I am forsaken by all the world since the loss of my suit; I now see nobody.—Only commit that affair to me, Madam, and I shall be most happy.—I ask nothing, I entertain
no

no hopes, I give no opposition to any thing you judge proper; the only spring I had left is now broken. Could I only promise myself that God would produce a change in my heart, and that the qualities of the religious state would succeed to the hope of quitting it, which I have now lost..... but that is impossible; this dress I wear has attached itself to my skin, to my bones, and yet only sits the more uneasy upon me. Ah! what a fate is mine! To be compelled for ever to be a nun, and to feel conscious that I must ever remain unfit for that state! to pass my whole life in beating my head against the gratings of my prison!.... Here I began to cry aloud; I endeavoured, but in vain, to suppress my voice. M. Manouri, surprised at this appearance, said: Madam, may I venture to ask you a question?—You may, Sir.—

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Must

Must not grief so violent be excited by some secret motive?—No, Sir; I hate a life of solitude; I feel that I detest it; I am conscious that I shall detest it as long as I live. I cannot submit to all the miseries which fill up the day of a recluse; it is a tissue of puerilities which I despise. I would have accommodated myself to them, could my exertions have succeeded. An hundred times have I endeavoured to impose upon my understanding, to overcome my repugnance, but in vain. I have envied, I have implored God to grant me, that happy imbecility of mind which my companions possessed; but I have not obtained it, and he will never be pleased to bestow it upon me. Every action I perform is wrong, every expression I utter is amiss; the defect of my vocation penetrates to every part of my conduct, and it does not pass with-

out

out observation. Every moment I insult the monastic life; my incapacity is called pride: it is the employment of those with whom I live to expose me to humiliation; faults and punishments multiply to infinity; and I spend every day in measuring with my eye the height of the walls.—Madam, it is not in my power to level them with the ground, but I can do something else.—Sir, do not make any attempt.—You must change your house; it shall be my business to enable you to put it in execution. I shall return and pay you another visit; I hope I shall have access to you; you shall hear of me without delay. Be assured, that if you agree to the attempt, I will succeed in effecting your liberation from this place. If you are treated here with extraordinary severity, do not fail to give me information.

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It

It was late when M. Manouri went away. I returned to my cell. Almost immediately we were summoned, by the bell, to evening service, and I was among the first who appeared. I allowed the nuns to pass me, and I took it for granted, that I was to remain at the door; and accordingly it was shut against me by the Superior. At supper, as she entered, she made me a sign to sit down upon the ground, in the middle of the refectory. I obeyed, and was only served with bread and water. I ate a little, while I bedewed my portion with my tears. Next day a council was held, and all the members of the community were assembled to hear my sentence. I was condemned to be deprived of recreation; to attend service, for a whole month, at the door of the choir; to receive my food, sitting upon the ground, in the middle of the refectory;

refectory; to undergo some ignominious punishment three days successively; to renew the assumption of the habit; and to repeat my vows; to use the hair cloth; to fast during two days; and to macerate myself every Friday after the evening service. I was placed upon my knees, with my veil dropped, while this sentence was pronounced.

Next morning the Superior came to my cell, accompanied by a nun carrying upon her arm a hair-cloth, and that robe of coarse stuff in which I was dressed when I was conducted to the dungeon. I perfectly understood the meaning of these preparations; I undressed myself, or rather they tore off my veil, stripped me of my clothes, and gave me the robe I have mentioned. My head was uncovered, my feet were bare, my long hair flowed over my shoulders, and my whole garb consisted

sisted of the hair-cloth, a very coarse shift, and the long robe which fastened round my neck and descended to my feet. In this situation I remained the whole day, and appeared at all the exercises we had to perform.

In the evening, when I had retired to my cell, I heard the sound of people approaching, chanting the litanies. The procession was composed of all the members of the house, ranged in two lines. They entered, and I appeared; they put a cord round my neck, a torch in the one hand, and a scourge in the other. One of the nuns took the end of the cord, and led me between the two ranks, and the procession moved on towards a small private oratory, consecrated to the holy Virgin. They came to my cell, chanting in a solemn voice, and they returned in silence. When I reached this little
oratory,

oratory, which was lighted up with two candles, I received orders to ask pardon of God, and of the community, for the scandal I had occasioned. The nun by whom I was conducted, told me in whispers what I was to say, and I repeated it word for word. After this, they took the cord from my neck, they stripped me to the middle, they threw my hair, which flowed over my shoulders, to one side, the scourge which I carried in my left hand was put into my right, and they began the *Miserere*. I understood what they expected me to do, and it was performed. The *Miserere* being concluded, I received a short exhortation from the Superior; the lights were extinguished, the nuns withdrew, and I again dressed myself.

When I returned to my cell, I felt violent pains in my feet; I examined them, and found them covered with
blood,

blood, from the wounds they had sustained from pieces of broken glass which the nuns had been so malicious as to scatter in my way.

I underwent this ignominious punishment, in the same manner, the two following days; only on the last a psalm was added to the *Miserere*.

Upon the fourth day, my habit of a nun was restored to me, with almost the same ceremony which is practised at this solemnity when it is public.

Upon the fifth, I renewed my vows. In the course of a month I went through the rest of the penance which had been imposed upon me; after which, by degrees, I returned to the ordinary state which prevailed in the community. I resumed my place in the choir, and in the refectory; and I discharged, in my turn, the various functions of the house. But how great was my surprise, when I observed
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my young friend, who had so kindly interested herself in my fortune! She appeared to be almost as much altered as myself. She was frightfully extenuated, her countenance was pale as death, her lips were white, and her eyes almost sunk. Sister Ursula, said I to her in a whisper, what is the matter with you? What is the matter, replied she, I am attached to you, and yet you can ask me such a question! It was full time that a period should be put to your sufferings; had they continued longer, death must have proved the misery which I felt.

To her care was I indebted for the wounds my feet had escaped upon the two last days of my penance. She had the kindness privately to sweep the passages, and to remove the pieces of glass which were scattered in the way. On the days when I was condemned to live
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on bread and water, she deprived herself of a part of her allowance, which she wrapt up in a clean cloth, and threw into my cell. The nun who was to lead me by the cord, was chosen by lot, and the lot fell upon her. She had the firmness to call upon the Superior, and protest to her, that she would sooner die than undertake this infamous and cruel office. Fortunately, this young lady's family was of considerable rank, and she enjoyed a large annuity, which she employed in a manner that pleased the Superior; and, for a few pounds of sugar and coffee, she found a nun to take her place. I will not be so presumptuous as to imagine, that the signal displeasure of God was displayed against the base creature who undertook the task, in the misfortune under which she has fallen. She has become mad, and is confined; but the Superior

Superior lives, governs, torments, and enjoys perfect health.

It was impossible that my constitution could resist trials so rude and so lengthened ; I fell sick. In this critical situation it was that sister Ursula really testified the sincerity of the friendship she had conceived for me ; she saved my life. As she herself would sometimes tell me, what she had thus preserved could not be deemed a blessing ; yet there was no kind of service which I did not experience from her attention, on those days when it was her turn to preside in the infirmary. Neither was I neglected at other times, thanks to the interest she took in my welfare, and to the rewards which she distributed among those who nursed me, in proportion as they gave me satisfaction. She asked permission to watch me during the night ; and the
Superior

Superior refused her request, under pretext that she was too delicate to support the fatigue. This refusal she considered as a most afflicting disappointment. All the attentions she bestowed, however, could not check the progress of my distemper; I was reduced to the utmost extremity, and received the last sacraments. A few moments before they were administered, I requested to see all the members of the community assembled, and the favour was granted. The nuns stood round my bed, and the Superior in the middle of them. My young friend sat at my pillow, and held my hand, which she bedewed with her tears. They conjectured that I had something to say; they raised me up, and supported me in an erect posture, by the assistance of two pillows. Then addressing myself to the Superior, I entreated her benediction,

diction, and that she would forget the faults I had committed ; of all my companions I asked pardon for the scandal my conduct had occasioned. I had sent for an infinite number of toys, which formed either the ornaments of my cell, or were reserved for my particular use, and I entreated the Superior's permission to dispose of them ; she consented, and I bestowed them upon the nuns who had acted as her attendants when I was thrown into the dungeon. I desired her who had led me by the cord on the day of my penance, to approach, and embracing her, while I presented her with my rosary and crucifix, I said : Dear sister, remember me in your prayers, and be assured that I will not forget you before God.... And why did not the Supreme Being call me away at this moment ? I would have gone to him without dis-

quietude; and what a blessing is such a state of mind! Who can promise that he will possess it a second time? This trying occasion, however, must again return. May God then renew my sufferings, and let this solemn hour be as tranquil as that which I experienced! I saw the heavens opened; and doubtless they were, for then conscience no longer deceives, and mine gave me promise of eternal felicity.

After receiving the sacrament I felt into a kind of lethargy; all this night I was given over. From time to time they came and felt my pulse; I was sensible of the touch of hands groping over my face, and I heard, seemingly, distant voices, saying: It increases.... Her nose is cold.... She will not survive an hour.... The rosary and the crucifix will be yours..... While another, in a tone of resentment, said
Retire,

Retire, retire, allow her to die in peace; have you not already tormented her enough? How delightful were my sensations upon recovering from this crisis, and again opening my eyes, to find myself in the arms of my friend! She had never left me; she had passed the night in administering me assistance, in repeating the prayers for persons in their last agonies, in making me kiss the crucifix, and applying it to her own lips after withdrawing it from mine. When she saw my eyes roll, and heard me breathe a profound sigh, she imagined that it was my last, and calling me her friend, uttered doleful cries, saying, My God, have compassion upon her, and upon me! My God, receive her spirit!—Beloved friend, when you are before the throne of God, remember Sister Ursula!.... I looked on her sadly smiling, and dropped a tear as I pressed

her hand. At this moment M. Bourvard arrived. This was the physician of the house, reputed a man of ability, but despotic, haughty, and severe. He tore my friend from me with violence, he felt my pulse and my skin; he was accompanied by the Superior and her favourites. After a few short questions with regard to what had taken place, he answered, She will recover.... and turning to the Superior, who derived no pleasure from this observation, Yes, Madam, said he, she will recover, her skin is favourable, the fever has abated, life begins to dawn anew in her eyes.... At every word of this, joy beamed on the countenance of my friend, while on the features of the Superior and her companions was displayed a disappointment and chagrin which I cannot describe, and which their constraint was ill able to dissemble. Sir, said I, I no longer
longer

longer desire to live.... So much the worse, replied he ; and after giving certain orders, he departed. I was told, that during my lethargy I frequently repeated, Dear mother, you then beckon me to you ! I am coming to join you ! I will tell you all..... It was my old Superior whom probably I thus addressed ; I have no doubt of it. I gave her picture to no one, but desired to carry it along with me to the grave.

The prognostic of M. Bouvard was fulfilled ; the fever subsided ; it was carried off by copious perspirations, and no doubt was now entertained of my cure : I did indeed recover, but the period of my convalescence was very tedious. It was decreed that I should endure, in this house, all the sufferings it is possible to experience. My distemper was in its nature malignant ; and Sister Ursula had hardly ever left

me a moment. As I began to regain my strength, hers declined; her stomach was deranged; in the afternoons she was attacked by fainting fits, which sometimes lasted a quarter of an hour: in this situation she appeared as dead; her eyes sunk; a cold sweat covered her brow, and, collecting in drops, flowed down her cheeks; her arms hung motionless at her side. The only way in which she received any benefit, was by unlacing her stays, and untying her clothes. When she recovered from the swoon, her first impulse was to look for me at her side, and there she always found me; sometimes, even when she retained a certain portion of sense and consciousness, she would stretch her hands round, without opening her eyes. The object of this action was so well known, that some nuns presenting themselves to her hand thus groping round, and

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and not being discovered, because she then happened to relapse without motion, would say to me : Sister Susan, it is you she wishes, come here then..... I would place myself at her feet, lay her hand upon my forehead, and there it remained till her swoon subsided. When it was over, she would say to me : Ah, Sister Susan, it is I who am to go away, and you who are to remain behind ; it is I who am first to see her again ; I will speak to her of you, and she will weep when she hears your sad story ; if they still love in Heaven, surely it is no crime to weep. If tears sometimes are bitter, they are sometimes too delightfully sweet.... Then she reclined her head upon my neck, wept profusely, and added : Adieu, Sister Susan ; adieu my friend ; who will share your sufferings when I am no more ? Who?... Oh !

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my dearest friend, how I lament you ! I am about to leave you, I feel that, I am. If you were happy, how deeply should I regret to die !

I was extremely alarmed at her situation. I spoke to the Superior. I proposed that she should be taken to the infirmary ; that she should be exempted from attending at service, and from performing any of the laborious exercises of the house, and that a physician should be called. But I only received for answer that her complaint was nothing serious, that the fainting fits, to which she was subject, would go away of themselves ; and Sister Ursula was perfectly contented to discharge her usual duties, and to follow her ordinary course of life. One day, after matins, at which she had been present, she did not appear again as usual ; I conceived that she must be
very

very ill. When morning services were over, I flew to her apartment, found her lying upon the bed, dressed. When I entered, she said to me; Are you there, my dear friend? I feared greatly that you would be long in coming, and I expected you. With what impatience did I long to see you! My swoon was so severe, and so long, that I believed it was to continue for ever, and that I was never to see you more. Hold, there is the key of my oratory, open the drawers, raise a little board, which separates the drawer from below upwards, into two parts; behind this board you will find a packet of papers. I have never been able to summon sufficient resolution to part with them, in spite of the danger which keeping them occasioned; and, notwithstanding the grief with which the perusal of them was attended (alas! they are almost obliterated

obliterated by my tears), when I am no more, commit them to the flames..... She was so feeble, and so oppressed, that she was unable to pronounce together two words of this address. She hesitated between every syllable, and spoke so low too, that, although my ear was close to her mouth, I had the utmost difficulty in hearing what she said. I took the key, pointed with my finger to the oratory, and she made signs that I was right. Feeling now a presentiment that I was about to lose her, and persuaded that her malady was a consequence of mine, or occasioned by the fatigue she had undergone, or by the attention she had bestowed, I burst into a flood of tears, and yielded to the emotions of the most violent affliction; I kissed her forehead, her eyes, her face, her hands; I asked her forgiveness. Meanwhile she appeared totally absent ;

absent ; she did not hear me ; and one of her hands , moving gently backwards and forwards, stroked my face. I believe that she no longer saw me ; perhaps, even she imagined that I had gone away, for she called, Sister Susan ?— I said, Here I am.—What o'clock is it ?—It is half past eleven,—Half past eleven ! Go to dinner, go ; you will return immediately..... The bell rang for dinner, and I was obliged to quit her.— When I had reached the door she called me back, and I returned. She made an effort to present me her face, I kissed it ; she took my hand, and kept it fast locked in hers. She seemed unwilling, even unable, to leave me ; It must be, however, said she, as she let me go, it is the will of God ; adieu, Sister Susan, adieu. Give me my crucifix... I put it into her hand, and went away.

When

When we were about to rise from table, I addressed myself to the Superior; I spoke to her, in presence of all the nuns, of the danger of Sister Ursula, and pressed her to judge of her situation in person. Very well; said she, we must see her. She went up stairs, accompanied by some others, and I followed. They entered her cell; poor Sister Ursula was no more; she was stretched upon her bed with her clothes on, her head reclining upon the pillow, her mouth and eyes shut, and the crucifix in her hand. The Superior coolly gazed upon her, and said: She is dead. Who could have imagined that she was so near her end? She was an excellent girl; let the bell toll her knell, and let her be buried.

I remained alone by her pillow. It is impossible for me to paint my sorrow, yet I envied her fate. I sat down be-

side her, I bathed her with my tears, I kissed her again and again, and spread the sheet over her face, the features of which now began to change. I then bethought me of executing the commission with which she had entrusted me. To prevent interruption in the discharge of this task, I waited till all the members of the house were employed at service, I opened the oratory, removed the board, and found a pretty large bundle of papers, which I burnt that very night. This young lady had always discovered a melancholy turn, and I do not recollect ever to have seen her smile, except once during her illness.

I was now left alone in the house, indeed in the world, for I now knew no human being that was interested in my fortune. I had heard no more of my advocate M. Manouri. I presumed,
either

either that he was discouraged by the difficulties with which he had to encounter, or that, distracted by amusement or business, the offers of service which he made me had escaped his recollection; nor did the supposition inspire me with any resentment. My mind naturally leans to indulgence; I can pardon any thing in mankind; but injustice, ingratitude, and inhumanity. I therefore excused M. Manouri as much as I could; and all the people of fashion who had displayed so much alacrity in the course of my law-suit, and in whose memory I no longer existed; and among others, even you yourself, the Marquis of Croismare. Such was my state of mind when our ecclesiastical Superiors paid a visit to the house.

They enter, they traverse the cells, they question the nuns, they require

an

an account both of the temporal and spiritual administration; and, according to the temper which they bring along with them to the discharge of this duty, they repair, or they increase the disorder. I now had an opportunity of again meeting the honest and rigid M. Hebert, with his two young and compassionate attendants. They seemed to recollect the deplorable state in which I had formerly appeared before them; their eyes glistened with tears, and I remarked the expressions of sympathy and joy upon their countenances. M. Hebert sat down, and placed me opposite to him. His two companions stood behind his chair, and their looks were fixed upon me. Sister Susan, said M. Hebert, pray how are you treated now?—I replied, Sir, I am forgotten.—So much the better.—And this is the utmost extent of my wishes; but
I have

I have an important favour to request of you, and that is to invite hither the mother Superior.—And why?—Because if any complaint happens to be made against her, she will not fail to ascribe it to me.—I understand; but still inform me of all you know concerning her.—Sir, I entreat you to call her, and that she may hear both your questions and my answers.—Tell us, nevertheless.—Sir, you seem desirous to ruin me.—No, entertain no apprehensions of any kind. From this moment she has no authority over you; before the end of this week you will be transferred to Sainte Eutropa of Arpajon. You have a good friend.—A good friend, Sir! I don't know who that can be.—It is your advocate.—M. Manouri?—He himself.—I did not imagine that he still kept me in remembrance.—He has waited upon your sisters, the Archbishop,

bishop, the chief President, and all who are remarkable for piety. He has lodged your dowry in the house I have mentioned, and you have now only a very short time to remain here. Thus, if you know that any disorder prevails, you may give me information of it, without exposing yourself to any disagreeable consequence; and I even require you to do so by your holy obedience.—I know of none.—What! since the loss of your suit, have they kept any measures at all with you?—They believed, and it was natural for them to believe, that I had been guilty of a fault in attempting to annul my vows, and I was obliged to ask the forgiveness of God.—But it is the circumstances of that proceeding which I wish to learn..... and saying this, he shook his head, knit his eye-brows, and I conceived that it was now in my power

to consign to the Superior a share of the stripes and the discipline which she had compelled me to undergo. This, however, was not my intention. The Archdeacon perceiving that he could obtain no satisfaction, left the room, with a recommendation of secrecy upon what he had told me of my translation to Saint Eutropa of Arpajon. As good M. Hebert walked alone through the passage, his two companions returned, and paid their respects to me in a manner extremely tender and affectionate. I am ignorant who they are; but may God preserve to them that feeling and compassionate character which is so rarely to be found in their situation, and which so well becomes the depositaries of the weaknesses of mankind, and the intercessors for the mercy of Heaven! I supposed that M. Hebert was employed in consoling, examining,

examining, or rebuking some other nun, when he again entered my cell. By what means, said he, did you become acquainted with M. Manouri? — In the course of my suit. — By whom was he recommended to you for the conduct of it? — By the President's lady. — You must have had frequent conferences with him in the course of your business. — No, Sir; I saw him very seldom. — How did you communicate to him your instructions? — By some memorials, written with my own hand. — You have preserved copies of these memorials? — No, Sir. — By whom were these memorials conveyed to him? — By the President's lady. — And how were you introduced to her acquaintance? — By Sister Ursula, my friend, and her relation. — You have seen M. Manouri since the loss of your suit? — Once. — That is very seldom.

You have never written to him? — No, Sir.—He will doubtless inform you of what he has done for you. I command you not to see him in the parlour, and if he writes to you, either directly or indirectly, to send me his letter without opening it; do you understand me? without opening it.—Yes, Sir; and I will obey you.—Whether the distrust of M. Hebert pointed to me, or to my benefactor, I was hurt by it.

M. Manouri came to Longchamp that very evening. I kept my word to the Archdeacon, and refused to see him. Next day he wrote to me by his messenger; I received his letter, and sent it unopened to M. Hebert. To the best of my recollection, this happened upon Tuesday. I expected, with the utmost impatience, the result of the promise of the Archdeacon, and the exertions of M. Manouri. Wednesday,
Thursday,

Thursday, Friday, passed without my hearing any thing upon the subject. How very tedious did these days appear to me ! I trembled, lest some obstacle had occurred to derange the whole plan. I was not to recover my liberty, but I was to change my prison ; and that is something. The first instance of good fortune inspires in our minds the hope of a second ; and this, perhaps, is the origin of the proverb, *That good luck seldom comes single.*

I was acquainted with the companions I was to quit, and I easily supposed that I should gain something by living among other prisoners. Be what they might, they could neither be more malicious nor worse-intentioned. On Saturday morning, about nine o'clock, a great commotion arose in the house. A very trifling matter serves to throw the heads of nuns into a ferment. They
went

went to and fro, they whispered; the doors of the dormitories opened and shut incessantly. This, as you will have observed from what I have already said, is the signal of monastic revolutions. I was alone in my cell. I waited in anxious suspense; my heart beat; I listened at the door; I looked through my window; I roamed about; without being conscious of what I did. Trembling with joy, I said to myself, It is me they are coming to seek, in a moment I shall be here no longer.... and I was not mistaken.

Two persons I had never seen presented themselves to me. They were a nun, and the girl who kept the turning box at Arpajon. In a single word they communicated to me the object of their visit. I collected in a hurry the few things that belonged to me, and threw them carelessly into the apron of the
5 girl

girl, who packed them up. I did not ask permission to see the Superior; Sister Ursula was no more; and I was therefore leaving nobody who cared for me, or whom I loved. I went down stairs; the doors were thrown open to me; after my packet was examined, I stepped into the coach, and away.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE NUN.



By DIDEROT.

THE NUN.

By DIDEROT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

VOLUME II.

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1797.

THE NUN.

THE Archdeacon and his two young ecclesiastics, the lady of the President D***, and M. Manouri, were assembled in the Superior's apartment, when they were informed of my departure. On the road the nun acquainted me with every thing relative to the house; and, by way of chorus to every expression which was uttered in its praise, the box girl added, It is the downright truth. . . . She congratulated herself that the choice of coming for me had fallen upon her, and at the same time made a tender of her friend-

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ship.

ship. In consequence of this, she entrusted me with some secrets, and gave me some advice with regard to the conduct I ought to follow. Her advice was probably very proper for her situation, but it was not applicable to mine.— I don't know whether you have ever seen the convent of Arpajon. It is a large square building, one of the sides of which overlooks the highway, the other the fields and gardens. At each of the front windows, there were one, two, or three nuns; and from this circumstance, I derived more knowledge of the order, that prevailed in the house, than from all the nun and her companion had said. It seemed that they knew the carriage in which we were, for in a twinkling all the veils disappeared, and I arrived at the gate of my new prison. The Superior came to meet me with open arms, embraced me,

me, took my hand and led me into the hall which belonged to the community, where a few nuns had assembled before I entered, and to which others immediately flocked.

The name of this Superior was Madam ***. I cannot resist the impulse I feel to give you a description of her before proceeding farther. She is a little woman, very plump, yet nimble and active in her motions. Her head never stands still upon her shoulders a single moment. There is always something out of order in her dress. Her figure is neither good nor bad: her eyes, one of which, the right, is higher and larger than the other, are full of fire, mixed with something of wildness. When she walks, she tosses her arms backwards and forwards. When she is going to speak, she opens her mouth before she has arranged her ideas, and

therefore stutters a little. When she sits, she shifts about in her chair as if she something felt uneasy. She is totally careless of decorum. She takes her handkerchief from her neck to rub her skin ; she crosses her legs, asks you a question, and while you answer, pays no attention to what you say. She speaks to you, and then bewilders herself ; stops short, and forgets where she was ; loses her temper, and calls you ass, brute, idiot, if you cannot lead her back to the subject. Sometimes she is so familiar as to say *thee* and *thou* ; sometimes haughty and imperious, even to disdain. Her moments of dignity are short. She is alternately tender and severe. The discomposure of her figure marks all the disorder of her mind, and the inequality of her character. From this cause order and confusion alternately succeeded each other in the house,

house. Some days all distinction and order were confounded; boarders and novices, novices and nuns, were mingled together; they ran from chamber to chamber, or took tea, coffee, chocolate, liqueurs, with each other; or service was hurried over with incredible celerity. In the midst of this tumult the countenance of the Superior suddenly changes; the bell rings; the nuns retire and shut themselves in their apartments; the most profound silence succeeds to noise, shouting and tumult; and you would imagine that, all at once, Death had visited every creature in the house. If a nun at such a time is guilty of the slightest omission, the Superior summons her to her cell, treats her with rigour, commands her to undress, and give herself twenty stripes with the scourge. The nun obeys, undresses herself, takes the scourge, and macerates herself.

But no sooner has she bestowed a few stripes, than the Superior, having resumed her sympathetic disposition, snatches the instrument of penance, bursts into tears, laments her misfortune in being obliged to punish, kisses her forehead, her eyes, her mouth, her shoulders, loads her with caresses and with praises : How soft and white is her skin ! how plump she is ! what a lovely bosom ! what beautiful ringlets ! . . . Sister Saint Augustine, how foolish you are to be ashamed ! let go that neckerchief, I am a woman, and your Superior ; O ! what a lovely bosom ! how firm ! and could I endure to see it torn by the lash ? No, No, that shall not be.—She then kisses her, raises her up, dresses her with her own hands, says to her the kindest things, dispenses with her attendance upon exercises, and sends her back to her cell. It is extremely

trémely unpleasant to be placed with women of this charactér. We cannot tell either what will pleàsè or displeàsè them , what we ought to do , and what we ought to avòid. Nothing is conducted after a régular system. We are either supplied with profusion, or starved to death. The economy of the house is thrown into confusión; remon- strances either givè offence or are neg- lected. We are either too near or too far rémòved from Superiors of this dé- scription. Neither true distancè nor proper measure are observèd. We pass from disgrace to favour, and from favour to disgrace, without knowing why. If you please, I will givè you a generál example of her administration. Twice in the year she used to run from cell to cell, and throw out at the windòw all the bòttles of liqueur that wèrè to be found; and four days after, she herself would

send presents of them to most of the nuns. Such was the woman to whom I had taken the solemn vow of obedience; for our vows accompany us from one house to another.

I entered the hall along with her; she led me, at the same time embracing me round the waist. A collation of fruits, biscuits and confectionary, was presented. The grave Archdeacon began my panegyric, which she interrupted by, They were wrong, they were wrong; I know it. . . . The grave Archdeacon attempted to go on, and she again interrupted him by, How could they possibly think of parting with her? She is sweetness and modesty itself; I am told she possesses the finest talents. . . . The grave Archdeacon attempted to resume his last words, but the Superior again interrupted him, by whispering in my ear, I am perfectly
3 in

in love with you, and when these pedants are gone, I will call our sisters, and you will sing us a little air, won't you?—I was seized with a violent inclination to laugh. The grave M. Hebert was a little disconcerted; his two young companions smiled at his embarrassment and mine. M. Hebert, however, resuming his usual character and manners, roughly ordered the Superior to sit down and be silent. She sat down, but she was ill at ease; she moved about on her chair, yawned, scratched her head, adjusted her dress where it was not deranged, while the Archdeacon very methodically harangued upon the house I had quitted, the ill treatment I had experienced, upon the house I had entered, and the obligations I owed to the persons who had befriended me. At this place, I looked at M. Manouri, and he turned his eyes to the ground. The conversation then became more general; the painful silence

lence imposed upon the Superior ceased, I went up to M. Manouri, and thanked him for the services he had done me. I trembled and stuttered, and knew not how to promise to testify my gratitude. My confusion, my embarrassment, my emotion (for I was really affected); mingled tears and joy; my whole conduct spoke to him more forcibly than words could have expressed. His answer was no better arranged than my address, for his confusion was not less than mine. I don't know exactly what he said, but I understood him to mean, that he would be more than sufficiently rewarded if he had contributed to soften the rigour of my fortune; that he would recollect what he had done with greater pleasure than I could feel; that he was extremely sorry that his business, which confined him to the Courts of Paris, would not allow him frequently to visit the Convent of Arpajon; but he hoped

for the permission of the Archdeacon, and of the Superior, to enquire after my health and my situation. The Archdeacon did not hear, but the Superior answered, As much as you please, Sir ; she shall be at liberty to do whatever she pleases ; we shall endeavour to repair here the sufferings which were elsewhere inflicted upon her.... And then she added to me in a whisper, So, you then suffered a great deal, my child ! But how could these creatures at Longchamp have the heart to use you ill ? I was formerly acquainted with your Superior ; we were boarders together at Port-Royal ; she was no better than her neighbours. We shall have an opportunity to see each other, and you will inform me of the whole circumstance.... Saying this, she took one of my hands, which she tapped gently with hers. The young ecclesiastics likewise paid

me their compliments. It grew late, and M. Manouri took leave of us. The Archdeacon and his companions went to the house of M***, Lord of Arpajon, to which they had been invited, and I remained alone with the Superior ; but we were not long left to ourselves. All the nuns, all the novices, all the boarders, flocked, indiscriminately, and in an instant I found myself surrounded by at least a hundred persons. I knew not which to listen to, and which to answer. Among them were figures of every description, and the remarks they made were of every sort. I could perceive, however, that they were not dissatisfied either with my answers or my person.

After this troublesome conference had lasted some time, and the first ardour of curiosity was satisfied, the crowd decreased, the Superior dismissed the rest, and

and she went in person to instal me in my cell. She performed the honours of it in her own way. She pointed out the oratory, and said to me, Here my little friend will say her prayers ; I will direct a cushion to be laid upon the step, that her little knees may not be hurt. There is no holy water in the bason ! that Sister Dorothy always forgets something ! Try that arm chair, and see how it fits you. . . . Saying this, she seated me, turned back my head, and kissed my forehead. She then went to the window, to see that the sashes played easily ; to the bed next, and drew and undrew the curtains, to see that they shut properly. She examined the blankets, they were good ; she took the bolster, and stroking it up, said, Dear little head will lie very well there. These sheets are not fine, but, they are such as are allowed to the members of the community.

community. The mattress is good. . . . Having done this, she came up, embraced, and took leave of me. During this scene, I said to myself, O the foolish creature ! and thought I might expect to spend both good and bad days.

I put all my things in order in my cell ; I was present at evening service, at supper, and at the recreation which followed. Some of the nuns accosted me, I was shunned by others. The former were anxious to secure my protection with the Superior, the latter were alarmed at the predilection she had already discovered in my favour. These first moments passed in mutual compliments, in questions relative to the house I had quitted, in attempts to sound my character, my inclinations, my understanding, my taste. They employ every artifice to discover your temper and character. It is a train of little ambuscades,

ambuscades, into which they endeavour to draw you, and from which they form the most accurate conclusions. For instance, a word of scandal is introduced, and then they watch your looks with the strictest eye. They begin a story, and they try whether you leave it with indifference, or express a wish to hear the remainder. If you make a common remark, it is extolled as very fine, though they know that is nothing extraordinary. They praise or blame you, with a view to discover your disposition. They endeavour to unveil your most secret thoughts. They ask you questions concerning your reading. They offer you books, both sacred and profane. The choice you make is remarked. They tempt you to commit some slight violation of the rules. They throw out to you oblique insinuations against the Superior. Every thing is
cached

caught at and repeated. They quit you, and again join your company. They sound your sentiments upon manners, piety, the world, religion, the monastic life, upon every thing. From these reiterated experiments, an epithet, descriptive of your character, is derived, and annexed to your name. Thus I was called Sister Saint Susan *the reserved*.

The evening of my arrival I received a visit from the Superior, who came to undress me. She took off my veil and my neckerchief, put on my night-cap, and entirely undressed me herself. She uttered innumerable compliments, and bestowed upon me a thousand caresses, which a little embarrassed me, I know not wherefore, for neither she nor I meant any thing; even now that I reflect upon it, what meaning could we possibly have? I spoke of the subject to my director, who treated this familiarity

liarity which appeared to me, and still appears, innocent, in a very serious light, and gravely prohibited me from submitting to it any more. She kissed my neck, my shoulders, my arms, praised my shape and my size, and then put me into bed. She lifted up the bed clothes on both sides, kissed my eyes, then drew the curtains and went away. I forgot to mention that, supposing I was fatigued, she gave me permission to lie in bed as long as I pleased.

I availed myself of this permission, and this I believe is the only good night's repose I ever enjoyed in the cloister, and would have been so almost had I never left it. Next morning at nine o'clock, I heard a gentle knock at my door; I was still in bed; I answered, and the person entered. It was a nun, who told me, with no small

share of ill humour, that it was late, and the mother Superior wanted me. I rose, dressed myself in haste, and went down. Good morning, my child, said she; have you slept well? Here is some coffee, which has been kept for you an hour, I believe you will find it good; make haste and take it, then we shall have some conversation. . . . Saying this, she laid a cloth upon the table, and spread another upon my knee, poured out the coffee, and put in the sugar. The rest of the nuns were employed in the same manner, in each others apartments. While I was at breakfast she talked to me of my companions, painted them to me according to her feelings of aversion or favour, made me a thousand protestations of friendship, asked me innumerable questions concerning the house I had quitted, my parents, the grievances I had

I had

I had suffered, praised or blamed, as her fancy directed, and never heard any of my answers to an end. I never contradicted her. She was pleased with my understanding, my judgement, and my discretion. Meanwhile, in came one nun, then another, then a third, a fourth, and a fifth. They talked of the Superior's birds, she of the Sisters tricks, the others of all the little absurdities of those who were absent. They began to be very merry. There was a spinet in one corner of the cell. From mere absence of mind, I touched it with one of my fingers; for being but newly come to the-house, and unacquainted with those they made the subject of their mirth, the conversation afforded me little amusement; and though I had been more conversant in the circumstances, I should not have been better entertained. It requires a great deal of

wit to jest successfully ; and besides, who is there exempted from one foible or other which is liable to ridicule ? While they laughed, I struck a few notes ; by degrees I attracted their attention. The Superior came up to me, and giving me a gentle tap on the shoulder, Come, Saint Susan, said she, amuse us with your skill ; play first, and then sing. I did as she desired me. I performed a few pieces that I knew without book, flourished some others irregularly, and then sung a few verses of Mondonville's psalms. Very fine indeed, said the Superior ; but we have devotional pieces in the church, as much as we please ; we are alone, these are my friends, and they will also be yours ; sing us something more sprightly. Some of the nuns observed : But perhaps these form all her stock ; she is fatigued with her journey ; we must spare

spare

spare her ; this is quite enough for once.
—No, no, 'said the Superior, she accompanies delightfully, she has the finest voice in the world (and really I have a very good one, with more correctness, sweetness and flexibility indeed, than force and pitch) ; I will not let her off till she gives us something else.—I was a little offended at the remarks of the nuns, and answered the Superior, that my singing no longer amused the sisters.—But it still amuses me.—I suspected the sincerity of this answer. I sung, however, a very delicate canzonette, and they all clapped, applauded, embraced, caressed me, and entreated a second. All this was little hollow grimace, dictated by the answer of the Superior. There was scarcely one of them but would have deprived me of my voice, and broken my fingers, had it been in her power. Those who perhaps had never

heard music in their lives, thought proper to express themselves of my singing in terms equally ridiculous and disgusting, which by no means were well received by the Superior. Peace, said she to them, she sings and plays like an angel, and I wish her to come here every day ; I myself *formerly understood the harpsichord a little*, and I wish her assistance in recovering what I have now forgotten. Ah ! Madam, said I, when we have once understood any thing, it is never entirely forgotten. . . . With all my heart then, give me your place. . . . After a few flourishes, she played some things, foolish, wild and incoherent, as her own ideas ; but through all the defects of her execution, I saw she had a touch infinitely superior to mine. I told her so, for I am fond of bestowing praise, and I rarely miss the opportunity of doing it when consistent with truth,

4

truth ; it is attended with so agreeable a sensation ! The nuns disappeared one after the other, and I remained alone with the Superior to converse of music. She was seated, I was standing ; she took my hands, and squeezing them, said to me, But besides that she plays finely, she has the prettiest fingers in the world ; look here, Sister Theresa. . . Sister Theresa dropped her eyes to the ground, blushed and stuttered : yet whether I had pretty fingers or not, whether the Superior was right, or wrong in the observation, how could this Sister be affected by it ? The Superior took me round the waist, and she discovered that I had a very excellent shape ; she drew me towards her, and seated me on her knees. She turned my head, and bade me look at her. She praised my eyes, my mouth, my cheeks, my complexion.

I made no answer ; my eyes were fixed upon the ground, and I passively suffered all her caresses. Sister Therea was absent, restless, walked confusedly about, took up every thing, though she wanted nothing, knew not what to make of herself, looked out at the window, imagined she heard some one knock at the door. At last the Superior said, Saint Theresa, you may retire if you are weary.—I am not weary Madam. But I have a thousand questions to ask this girl.—I have no doubt of it.—I am anxious to learn her whole history ; how can I repair the sufferings she has been forced to undergo, if I know not what they are ? I must have her recount them to me without omitting any thing ; I am sure my heart will be torn, and that I shall weep at her story ; but no matter : Saint Susan, when are you to tell me all this?—

Madam, whenever you are pleased to desire it.—I entreat you just now, if we have time. What o'clock is it?—Madam, it is five o'clock, replied Sister Theresa, and the bell is going to ring for vespers.—Begin now however.—But Madam, you promised me a moment of consolation before vespers. I am disquieted by unpleasant thoughts, I would fain open my heart to you. If I go to service without this precaution, I shall be unable to pray; my mind will wander.—No, no, said the Superior, you are foolish with these ideas of yours. I wager I know what is the matter; we will speak of it to morrow.—Ah! dear mother, said Sister Theresa, throwing herself at the feet of the Superior, and bursting into tears, let it be just now.—Madam, said I to the Superior, rising up from her knees, on which I had continued to sit, grant my sister the favour
she

she asks, do not allow her to remain uneasy : I will retire ; opportunities will occur to satisfy the interest you are so good to take in my fortune ; and when you have heard what Sister Theresa has to communicate, her uneasiness will vanish..... I made a motion towards the door, in order to withdraw, but the Superior detained me with one of her hands ; Sister Theresa upon her knees had taken the other, kissed it and bathed it with her tears, while the Superior said to her, In truth, St. Theresa, you are extremely troublesome with your disquietudes ; I have told you that I am displeased, that I am constrained by this conduct : I do not choose to be constrained.—I know it ; but I am not mistress of my thoughts ; I wish ardently I could controul them, but I cannot.—Meanwhile I had retired, and left the young Sister with the Superior. I could
not

not refrain from looking at her in church: Her countenance still discovered sadness and depression. Our eyes met several times, and I thought that she could scarcely support my looks. As for the Superior, she had fallen asleep in her pew.

Service was dispatched in an instant: the choir, from what I could observe, was not the part of the house in which they were most happy. We left it with all the quickness and noise of a flock of birds just escaped from their aviary; and the Sisters separated, running, laughing, and talking one with another. The Superior shut herself up in her cell, and Sister Theresa stopped at the door of hers, watching as if curious to know what was become of me. I retired to my apartment, and Sister Theresa's door a short time after was shut very gently. It struck me that this young girl was jealous of me, and
that

that she was afraid lest I should supplant her in the intimacy and good graces of the Superior. I observed her for some days following; and when I had ascertained my suspicion to be well founded, from her little resentments, from her little alarms, her perseverance in tracing every step she took in examining me, in interfering between the Superior and me, in interrupting our conversations, depreciating my qualities, and exposing my faults, and still more from the paleness of her looks, the gloom of her countenance, her sighs, and the derangement of her health, and even of her mind, I went and said to her, My dear friend, what is the matter with you?—She made me no reply; my visit surprised and embarrassed her; she knew neither what to say, nor what to do.—You do me injustice; tell me, you are afraid lest

I take

I take any improper advantage of the partiality which our mother has formed for me, in order to estrange you from her affections. Be assured this is not my character : if ever I have been fortunate enough to obtain any influence over her mind. . . .—You will possess as much as you think proper ; she loves you ; she now does for you what she at first did for me.—Well ! be assured I shall avail myself of the confidence which she may place in me only for the purpose of rendering you dearer to her than ever.—And does this depend on you ?—And why will it not depend on me ?—Instead of returning me an answer, she threw herself upon my neck, and said to me with a sigh : It is not your fault, I know it well ; I say so to myself every moment ; but promise me. . . .—What do you want me to promise ?—That. . . .—Well, I'll do any thing

thing in my power.—She hesitated ; she covered her eyes with her hands, and said to me in a tone of voice so low that I could scarcely hear her, That you will see her as seldom as you can. . .—This request appeared to me so strange, that I could not refrain from replying, And of what consequence is it to you, whether I see our Superior often or seldom ? It would give me no concern though you were never out of her sight, and you must not be vexed were I to be as much with her : is it not sufficient for me to protest to you, that I will neither injure you, nor any other person, in her opinion.—She made me no reply, but parting from me, and throwing herself down upon her bed, she exclaimed in accents of sorrow, I am undone !—Undone ! How ? But you will persist in thinking me the wickedest creature in the world !

We

We were in this situation when the Superior came in. She had gone to my cell, and had not found me ; she had run in quest of me through almost every part of the house, to no purpose ; it had never entered her mind that I was with Sister Saint Theresa ; when she discovered it, however, by means of those which she had sent in search of me, she hastened to the cell. There were some signs of agitation in her look, and in her countenance ; but the whole of her figure was rarely of a piece ! Saint Theresa sat in silence upon her bed, and I at the foot of it. I said to her, My dear mother, I ask your pardon for coming here without your permission. — It had been better, indeed, replied she, had you requested leave. — But this dear sister moved my compassion ; I observed her uneasy. — About what ? — Shall I tell you ? and why should I not

not tell you? It is a sort of delicacy which does honour to her mind, and marks the warmth of her attachment to you. The testimonies of kindness which you have given me, have alarmed her tenderness, and she is afraid lest I obtain in your heart a preference to her; this sentiment of jealousy, so honest, so natural, and so flattering to you, my dear mother, had, I perceived, become a source of pain to my sister, and I came here to encourage her.—The Superior, after having listened to me, assumed a stern and commanding aspect, and said to her: Sister Theresa, I have loved you, and still love you; I have no ground of complaint against you, and you never shall have any against me; but I cannot suffer these exclusive pretensions. Lay them aside, as you dread forfeiting my remaining esteem: recollect the fate of Sister Agatha....

Then

Then turning to me, she said, I mean that tall black girl, whom you have seen opposite to me in the choir. (For I lived so retired, I had so lately come to the house, and I was so little acquainted, that I did not know the names of my companions). She added, I loved her when Sister Theresa came to the house, and she naturally became an object of my attention. She felt the same sort of uneasiness, and committed the same follies; I cautioned her, but she did not correct them; and I was obliged to take some severe measures, which I have been under the necessity too long of continuing, and which are entirely foreign to my disposition; for they will tell you, that I am a person of a mild temper, and that I never inflict punishment but with reluctance. . . . Then addressing herself to Saint Theresa, she proceeded: My

child, that I do not wish to be put under constraint, I have told you already; you know me; don't oblige me to do violence to my nature..... Then, leaning one arm upon my shoulder, she said to me, Come, Saint Susan, accompany me back to my cell. We went out. Sister Theresa wished to follow us; but the Superior, leaning her head carelessly back over my shoulders, desired her, in a tone of authority, to return to her apartment, and not to leave it without her permission.... She obeyed, violently shut the door, and let some words escape, which made the Superior tremble, I know not why, for they had no meaning. I perceived her resentment, and said to her, My dear mother, if you have any kindness for me, pardon Sister Theresa; she has forgotten herself; she knows neither what she says, nor what she does. — Do you ask me to
forgive

forgive her? I have no inclination to do it; but what will you give me?— Ah! my dear mother, am I happy enough to have any thing which can please you, and which can appease your anger?—She cast her eyes downward, she blushed, and sighed; in truth, she looked like a lover. Then, throwing herself carelessly upon me, as if she had been in a swoon, she said: Hold your forehead near me, that I may kiss it..... I inclined myself forward, and she kissed my brow. From that time, as soon as any of the nuns committed a fault, I interceded for them, and I was sure to obtain her pardon by some innocent compliance; it was always a kiss upon the forehead, the neck, the eyes, the cheeks, the mouth, the hands, the bosom, or the arms, but most frequently on the mouth; according to her, my breath was sweet,

my teeth white, and my lips fresh and red. In truth, I should have been very pretty, had I deserved a very small portion of the praises which she lavished upon me; if it was my forehead, it was white, smooth, and of a charming form; if my eyes, they were brilliant; if my cheeks, they were large and soft; if my hands, they were small and handsome; if my bosom, it was firm, and of an exquisite shape; if my arms, it was impossible that they could be rounder or more elegantly turned; if my neck, none of the sisters had one of such extraordinary beauty; and I know not what besides. There was some truth in her praises; I have repeated a great deal of it, but not all. Sometimes, looking at me from head to foot, with an air of complacency which I had never seen in any other woman, she would say, Yes, it is the greatest blessing

blessing that God has called her to this retreat ; with such a figure in the world, she would have damned as many men as had seen her, and damned herself along with them. God orders all things well.

In the mean while we were advancing to her cell ; I shewed a disposition to leave her, but she took me by the hand, and said to me, It is too late to begin your history at Saint Mary's and at Longchamp, but come in, you will give me a short lesson upon the harpsichord. In a moment she had opened the harpsichord, got ready a book, and brought me a chair, for she was very active. I sat down. She thought that I might be cold, and taking a cushion from off one of the chairs, she put it before me, and stooping, she took my two feet and placed them upon it ; she then planted herself behind me, and

leaned upon the back of my chair. After putting the instrument in tune, I played some pieces of Couprin, of Rameau, and of Scarlatti ; in the mean time she had lifted a corner of my neckkerchief, and placed her hand upon my bare shoulder, with the extremities of her fingers upon my bosom. She sighed ; she appeared to labour under an oppression ; her bosom palpitated ; she at first pressed me hard upon the shoulder with her hand ; she then desisted ; she seemed to have lost all power, and as if she had been quite lifeless, her head fell down upon mine. In truth, she had incredible sensibility, and the finest taste for music ; I never knew any person upon whom it produced such singular effects.

We were thus amusing ourselves, in a manner equally simple and agreeable, when suddenly the door burst open

with such violence, that both I and the Superior were alarmed. It was that mad-cap Theresa. Her dress was disordered; her eyes looked wild. She examined the appearance of us both with the most particular attention; her lips quivered, and she was unable to speak. She soon recollected herself however, and threw herself at the feet of the Superior. I joined my entreaties to hers, and again obtained her pardon. But the Superior protested, in the most decided manner, that it should be the last, at least for faults of this nature; and we then withdrew together.

Returning to our cells, I said to her: Dear sister, take care, you will totally deprive yourself of the favour of the Superior. I will not abandon your interest, but you put my credit with her too severely to the proof;

and I should be afflicted beyond measure, to be no longer able to employ it in the service of you and of our companions. But by what fancies are you possessed?—To this, no answer.—What apprehensions do you entertain of me?—To this, no answer.—May not our mother feel an equal attachment to both?—No, no, said she with great emotion, that is impossible; I must soon become disgusting to her, and I shall die with grief! Ah! why did you come here? you will not long be happy, that I am sure, and I shall be for ever wretched.—But I am sensible, said I, that to have lost the favour of the Superior is a great misfortune; but I know a greater still, and that is, to have deserved it. You, however, have nothing to reproach yourself upon that subject.—Ah! would to God it were so!—If your own mind accuses you of any fault, you ought to
repair

repair it ; and the surest way of effecting this object, is to support the punishment of it with patience.—That I cannot, I cannot ; and is it her part too to inflict the penalty ?—Her part ! Sister Theresa, her part ! is it thus you speak of a Superior ? This is not at all right ; you forget yourself. I am sure the fault you now commit, is more serious than any with which you can reproach yourself.—Ah ! would to God it were so ! she repeated ; would to God it were !.....And here we separated, she to hide herself in her cell, I to meditate in mine, upon the whimsies with which women's heads abound. Such is the consequence of seclusion. Man is born for society. Separate him from his kind, place him in an isolated state, his ideas will become distorted, his character will be reversed, a thousand absurd affections will spring up in his

his heart, his mind will teem with extravagant thoughts, as an uncultivated field is overrun with noxious weeds. Place a man in a forest, and he will become savage; in a cloister, where the idea of compulsion is combined with that of servitude, and it is still worse. He may quit the forest, but the cloister he can never abandon. He is free in the forest, he is a slave in the cloister. It perhaps requires more strength of mind to withstand solitude than misery. Misery degrades, but seclusion depraves. Is it better to live in a state of contempt than in a state of folly? It is a question which I shall not presume to decide; but they both are calamities which we ought to shun.

I perceived that the tenderness which the Superior had conceived for me daily increased. I was constantly in her cell, or she in mine. For the slightest indisposition

disposition she ordered me to receive the benefit of the infirmary, she dispensed with my performances of duties, she sent me early to bed, or excused me from rising to matins. In the choir, in the refectory, at recreation, she contrived to shew me marks of friendship. In the choir, if any verse occurred which contained a sentiment of tenderness and affection, she would sing it, addressing herself to me ; or, if it was sung by another, she fixed her looks upon me with a particular expression. In the refectory, she always sent me a part of the greatest delicacy with which she herself was served. At recreation, she would embrace me round the waist, and say the softest and most obliging things. She never received a present in which I did not participate ; sugar, coffee, liqueurs, snuff, linen, napkins, in short, whatever it was.

was. She stripped her own cell of prints, utensils, furniture, and an infinite number of agreeable or convenient articles, in order to embellish mine. I could scarcely be absent a moment, but on my return I found myself enriched by some new present. When I went to her cell to express my thanks, she felt a joy which it is impossible to describe; she embraced, caressed me, took me upon her knees, talked to me of the most secret concerns of the house; and, if I loved her, she promised herself a life a thousand times more happy than she could have enjoyed in the world. Then she would stop, and gaze upon me with languishing eyes, and say: Sister Susan, do you love me?—How is it possible that I should not love you? If I did not, my heart must be ungrateful indeed.—True.—You are so good!—Say, rather,

so

so fond of you... Saying this, she fixed her eyes upon the ground, she embraced me more ardently with the hand that encircled my waist; she sighed, she trembled; she seemed as if she had been desirous to communicate to me some secret which she was afraid to reveal. Tears streamed from her eyes, while she said to me, Ah ! Sister Susan, you do not love me.—I do not love you, dear mother !—No.—Tell me then what I must do to prove it.—You must guess that.—I reflect, but nothing occurs to my mind. (1) *****

My

(1) It was the object of Diderot, to bring monastic institutions into detestation, by painting the extravagant shapes which the passions assume, when the intentions of nature are disregarded. In the character of the Superior, he has described their effects upon a mind of strong sensibility.

My cell was almost opposite to that of Saint Theresa, and when I returned from the Superior her door was open. She expected me. She stopped me, and said: Ah! Saint Susan, you come from our mother's apartment?—Yes, said I.—You have staid there a long while.—As long as she wished me.—This is not what you promised me!—I made you no promise.—Durst you tell me, however, what passed there?..... Although my conscience reproached me with nothing, I will yet confess to you, Sir, that I was embarrassed by her

sensibility. The translator, however, hopes he will be excused if he forbears to shock an English reader with details, which, though calculated to expose vice, it may, perhaps, be more prudent to conceal from the eye of modesty. The French writers too, in this respect, are permitted a latitude which the English taste has forbidden.

her question. She perceived it, and urged me to tell her, till at last I replied : Dear sister, perhaps you will not trust my account, but you will probably believe that of our dear mother; and I will request her to inform you.—My dear Saint Susan, said she, with eagerness, beware of that; surely you do not wish to render me wretched; she would never pardon my curiosity; you are not acquainted with her character; she is capable of passing from the greatest tenderness to the extreme of ferocity; I know not to what extent I should experience her indignation. Promise me never to mention to her a word of this.—Do you seriously make that request? —I ask it upon my knees, I am afflicted beyond measure; I see clearly that I must summon resolution to submit, and I will exert it. Promise me to mention nothing of this
to

to her..... —I raised her up, and gave her my word. She was satisfied with this pledge, and with reason. We then withdrew, she to her cell, I to mine.

After returning to my apartment, I found myself thoughtful; I attempted to pray, but could not. I endeavoured to be busy. I began one piece of work, which I laid aside for another; I again quitted this for a third; my hands refused their service, and I appeared quite enfeebled; never had I experienced a similar situation; my eyelids closed of themselves; I fell into a short slumber, although I never slept in the day-time. When I awoke, I questioned my own mind upon what had passed between the Superior and me; I examined myself; and even now, when I subject myself to this examination, I think I can discover..... but the ideas
which

which suggested themselves, were so vague, so fantastic, so ridiculous, that I rejected them with disdain. The result of my reflections was, that it was some malady to which she was subject. I next imagined, that perhaps the malady was infectious, that it had seized St. Theresa, and that I also should feel its attack.

Next morning, after matins, our Superior said to me: Saint Susan, to-day I hope to be made acquainted with all your adventures; come... I went along with her. She placed me in her arm chair by the side of her bed, and she seated herself upon a chair that was a little lower. She was below me, because I am taller, and I was also upon a higher seat. We were close together, her elbows leaning upon the bed. After a short interval of silence, I began: Although I am young, I have

experienced a great deal of suffering. It will soon be twenty years since I came into the world, and the twenty years of my life, mark also the period of my miseries. I don't know whether I am able to tell you all, though you were disposed to hear it. My history is one melancholy train of misery; misery in the house of my parents, misery in the convent of Saint Mary, miseries in the convent of Longchamp, miseries in every situation; where, dear mother, am I to begin?—Begin with the very first.—But, dear mother, said I, that will be a very long and a very sad story, and I should be unwilling to wound your heart so much with sorrowful events.—Fear not, I am fond of weeping; tears are accompanied with many delightful sensations to a mind of sensibility. You should like to weep too; you will wipe away
my

my tears, and I will wipe away yours ; and, perhaps, we shall be happy in the very middle of the story of your sufferings : who knows to what point the feelings of tenderness may carry us ?... Saying these words, she looked up to me with eyes already moistened ; she took my two hands, and drew me nearer to her, till we touched each other. Begin your narration, my child, said she, I am all expectation ; I feel within me a disposition tremblingly alive to tenderness ; never in my whole life have I felt my heart more sympathising and more affectionate..... I began my story nearly as I have now related it in writing to you. It is impossible for me to describe the effects which it produced upon her feelings ; the sighs she breathed, the tears she shed, the expressions of indignation she uttered against my cruel parents, against the unrelenting nuns

of Saint Mary's and Longchamp. I should be extremely sorry that the least of the evils she imprecated upon their heads, should overtake them. I should not wish to hurt a hair of the head of my bitterest enemy. From time to time she interrupted me, walked through the room, and again resumed her place. Again she would raise her eyes and her hands to heaven, and then conceal her head between my knees. When I spoke of the scenes of the dungeon, of my exorcism, of the ignominious punishment to which I was subjected upon the loss of my suit; she cried aloud; when I finished my narration I was silent, and she remained some time leaning upon the bed, her face hid in the clothes, and her arms extended above her head. Dear mother, then said I, I entreat your pardon for the pain I have occasioned you; I warned
you

you against it; and I only submitted to your own desire.... She answered only with these words: Wicked creatures! horrible creatures! It is in convents alone that humanity can be so completely extinguished. When hatred is combined with habitual malignity of temper, it is impossible to say to what length cruelty may be carried. Happily I am of a kind disposition, I love all my nuns. They have all, in a greater or less degree, formed themselves upon my character, and they entertain a mutual affection for each other. But how could this delicate constitution resist so many torments? How were not all these little members irreparably injured? How did this delicate frame escape being destroyed? How were not the lustre of these eyes extinguished by so many tears? Cruel wretches! to bind these arms with

cords !.... and she took my arms and
 kissed them..... To drown these eyes
 in tears !.... and she kissed them....
 To extort groans and sighs from that
 mouth !... and she kissed it.... To con-
 demn that serene and beauteous coun-
 tenance to veil itself continually in
 clouds and sorrow !... and she kissed
 it..... To wither the roses on these
 cheeks !... and she pinched them with
 her fingers, and kissed them.... To
 violate that head ! tear that hair ! load
 that brow with anxiety !..... and she
 kissed my head, my brow, my hair.....
 To dare encircle that neck with cords,
 and tear these shoulders with sharp
 points !..... and she kissed them * * * *

* * * * *

* * *. We remained in silence a good
 while, till at last the Superior observed :
 Susan, from what you say of your first
 Superior, I imagine she must have
 been

been very dear to you. — Very dear, indeed. — She did not love you better than I do, but she was more beloved... You give me no answer? — I was wretched, and she soothed my sorrows. But whence arises your repugnance to the religious life? Susan, you have not told me all. — Pardon me, Madam, I have indeed. — What! it is impossible, lovely as you are, (for, my child, you are most lovely — you cannot conceive how very much) that no person has told you so. — I have been told so. — And he who has told you was not disagreeable to you? — No. — And you conceived no attachment to him? — Not the least. — What! your heart has never been touched? — Never. — What! there was no passion, either secret or disapproved by your parents, that inspired your aversion to the convent? Confide your secret to me, I am indulgent. — I have

no secret of that kind, dear mother, to entrust you with. — But, once more, whence arises your repugnance to the religious life? — From the life itself. I hate its duties, its employments; I detest seclusion and constraint; I think myself destined for another situation. — But, upon what foundation does that idea appear to rest? — Upon the disgust with which I am overwhelmed; I am dissatisfied, I am discontented with my situation. — Even here? — Yes, dear mother, even here; in spite of all the kindness you have shown me. — But, is it because you are conscious of certain emotions, certain desires? — I have none. — I believe it; you seem to be of a tranquil character. — Very much so. — Even cold. — I don't know. — You are not acquainted with the world? — Very little. — What attractions then can it possess for you? — That I do not myself exactly

exactly comprehend ; but, certainly, such must exist. — Is it liberty that you regret ? — Probably, and many other things beside. — And pray what may these other things be ? My friend, open your heart freely to me ; would you wish to be married ? — I should prefer it to my present situation, that is certain. — On what is that preference founded ? — I do not know. — You do not know ! but, tell me what impression does the presence of a man communicate ? — None : if he is a man of sense, and speaks well, I listen to him with pleasure ; if he is handsome, I remark his figure. — And your heart remains tranquil ? — Hitherto it has experienced no emotion. — What ! when they have fixed their ardent glances on yours, you never felt..... — Sometimes embarrassment ; I was obliged to turn my eyes to the ground. — And without any trouble ?

trouble? — None. — And your senses said nothing? — I am unacquainted with the language of the senses. — They have a language of their own however. — Very possibly. — And you are unacquainted with it? — Perfectly. — — — What! you. . . . It is a delightful language; would you wish to know it? — — — No, my dear mother, what advantage should I derive from the knowledge? — — — It would dissipate your dissatisfaction. — — — Perhaps increase it. And besides, what avails that language without an object? — — — When we speak, it is always to some one; that, doubtless, is better than to confine ourselves to solitary entertainment, though not unaccompanied with pleasure. — — — I do not at all understand the subject. — — — If you please, my dear child, I will explain myself more clearly. — — — No, dear mother, no. I am ignorant, and I prefer that situation, to the acquisition

5

quisition of knowledge that would render me, perhaps, more wretched than I am. I have no desires, nor do I wish to discover such as I cannot gratify.---And why can you not?---And how can I?---How very innocent she is!---True; I am, dear mother, and I would die a thousand deaths rather than cease to be so.... I know not what unpleasant circumstance these last words might seem to her to contain, but she suddenly changed countenance, she became serious and embarrassed. Her hand, which she had laid upon one of my knees, ceased to press me, and was then withdrawn. She remained with her eyes fixed upon the ground.---My dear mother, said I, what have I done? Can any thing offend you that has escaped my lips? forgive me. I exercise the liberty you have allowed me; none of the observations I make to
you

you are studied ; and though I were to prepare them, I should express them no otherwise, perhaps worse. ' The subject upon which we converse is so very strange ! pardon me. . . . Saying these words, I threw my arms round her neck, and leant my head upon her shoulder. She threw hers round me, and pressed me very tenderly. We remained in this posture a few moments ; then resuming her tenderness, and her serenity, Susan, said she, do you sleep well ?--- Very well, said I, especially of late.--- Is your sleep uninterrupted ?--- Most commonly.--- When your slumbers are broken, how are your thoughts employed ?--- Upon my past life, and upon my future prospects ; I pray, or I weep, I can't tell ?--- And in the morning, when you awake early ?--- I rise.--- Whenever you awake ?--- Whenever I awake.--- You are not fond then of indulging

dulging your fancy? --- No.---Of re-
posing upon your pillow?---No.---Of
enjoying the genial warmth of the
bed?---No.---Never?....*****

I do not know what farther conver-
sation we had, when a message was
brought that she was wanted in the
parlour. I thought I perceived that
this visit caused her a good deal of
chagrin, and that she would have much
rather preferred to have remained chat-
ting with me, although our conversation
was not deserving of much regret. We
separated however,

The community had at no time been
happier, than since I became a member
of it. The Superior seemed to have
lost the inequality of her character; it
was observed that I had fixed her ca-
pricious temper. To please me, she
even gave several days of recreation,
and what are called festivals. Upon
these

these days the entertainment is a little better than ordinary, the services are likewise curtailed, and the intervals between them are allowed for recreation. But this happy period was destined to pass away, both for others and for me.

Disquietude began to prey upon the heart of the Superior; her person wasted away, she lost her gaiety, her sleep vanished. The night which succeeded our last conversation, when sleep had closed every eye, and silence reigned in the house, she rose. After wandering some time through the passages, she came to my cell; I was in a light slumber; I thought I heard her; she stopped, as she leant her head upon my door, she seemed to make sufficient noise to awake me, although I had been asleep. I remained silent, I imagined I heard the voice of some one
uttering

uttering moans, of some one breathing sighs. At first I was seized with a slight shivering of horror; I then determined to say *Ave*. Instead of returning any answer, the person glided lightly away. Some time after, the visit was repeated: again I heard the sound of sighs and moans; I again repeated *Ave*, and a second time the person retired. I summoned up my courage, and by and by fell asleep. While I was asleep the same person entered, sat down by my bed-side, drew my curtain with one hand, and in the other held a candle, the light of which beamed upon my countenance, while she who carried it, gazed on me as I slept; such, at least, was the conclusion I formed from her attitude when I opened my eyes. This person was the Superior. I suddenly started up. She perceived my fright, and said, Susan, be

be not alarmed, it is I..... I dropped my head again upon my pillow, and said, Dear mother, what has brought you here at this time of night? What is the purpose of this visit? Why are you not now asleep?---I cannot sleep, replied she, it will be a long while ere I sleep. I am tormented by frightful dreams. No sooner have I shut my eyes, than the sufferings you have endured, paint themselves anew to my imagination; I behold you in the hands of those inhuman wretches, I see your hair dishevelled, your feet gored, the torch in your hand; the cord round your neck; I think they are about to take your life; I tremble, I shudder with horror, a cold perspiration covers my whole body; I wish to fly to your assistance, I cry out; I awake, and in vain await the return of sleep. Such has been my situation this night.

I feared

I feared that heaven thus announced to me some misfortune which had befallen my friend ; I arose, I came to your door, I listened, I thought you were not asleep, you spoke, and I retired ; I returned, you again spoke, and again I withdrew. I returned a third time ; and when I thought you were asleep, I entered. I have been at your side some time, and was afraid to awake you ; I hesitated at first whether I should draw the curtains, from a fear of interrupting your repose ; I intended to go away, but I could not resist the desire of seeing if my dear Susan was well. I gazed upon you. How lovely a sight do you present, even when you sleep ! — My dear mother, how kind you are ! — I feel myself affected by the cold, but I know that I have nothing disagreeable to apprehend for my friend, and I believe I shall sleep. Give me

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your hand.—I presented it to her.—
How calm is her pulse! how equal!
No passion agitates her frame!—I have
enjoyed a very peaceable slumber.—
How happy are you!—Dear mother,
you continue to expose yourself to the
cold.—You are right; adieu, my lovely
friend, adieu; I am going away. . . She
did not go, however, but continued to
gaze upon me; while two tears dropped
from her eyes. Dear mother, said I,
what is the matter with you? you weep;
how sorry am I to have talked to you
of my sufferings! . . . * * * * * Are
you ill? dear mother, said I, what
must I do?—I tremble, said she, I
shudder, a mortal coldness possesses
my whole body.—Do you wish me to
rise, and resign you my place?—No,
said she, it would not be necessary for
you to rise; raise the bed-clothes
only a little, that I may warm myself
beside

beside you, and remove my indisposition.—Dear mother, said I, but that is forbidden. What would be said of it, were it known? In the convent of St. Mary, a nun happened to go by night to the cell of another, her particular friend; and I cannot repeat to you all the censures which it occasioned. The Director sometimes has asked me if any person had ever proposed to come and sleep beside me; and he seriously enjoined me never to allow it to be done. I have even spoken to him of your caresses. In my opinion they are innocent, but he considers them in a different light. I don't know how I came to forget his advice; I intended to speak to you on the subject.—My dear friend, all around us are asleep, no one shall know of it. It is my province to reward and to punish; and let the Director say what he will, I see no

harm in one friend admitting beside her a friend, whom apprehensions have alarmed; who has awoke, and come during the night, in spite of the inclemency of the season, to see whether or not her dearly-beloved is in danger. Susan, have you never shared the same bed in the house of your parents, with one of your sisters?—No, never.—If the occasion for doing it had occurred, would you not have agreed to it without scruple? If your sister, disquieted with apprehensions, and benumbed with cold, had asked a place beside you, would you have refused?—I believe not.—And am not I your dear mother?—Yes, you are, but that is forbidden.—My dear friend, it is by me it is prohibited to others, and it is I who permit, who even require it of you. Let me warm myself one moment, and I will go away. Give me your hand..... I gave

it her. Hold, said she, feel, observe; I tremble, I shudder, I am cold as marble.... And indeed it was true. Oh! dear mother, your health will suffer in consequence of this. But, stop, I will turn to one side, and place you in the warm place..... I adjusted myself on one side, I lifted up the clothes, and she took my place. Oh, how ill she was! A general tremor shook every member of her body; she attempted to speak, she endeavoured to approach me, but she could neither articulate nor stir. In a feeble tone she said to me, Susan, my dear, come a little nearer to me..... She stretched out her arms. I turned my back to her. She gently took hold of me, and drew me towards her. She placed one arm under and another over me, and said: I am frozen; I am so cold, that I am afraid of touching you for fear of hurting you.—Dear mother,

never fear.—Then she put one of her hands upon my breast, and another round my waist. Her feet were placed under mine, and I pressed them in order to warm them, while the dear mother said to me : Ah ! my dear friend, see how soon my feet have recovered warmth when nothing interposes between them and yours.—But, said I, may you not warm your whole body in the same manner?—Yes, if you please. I had turned round, when, suddenly, two violent knocks were heard at the door. Terrified at the noise, I instantly leaped out of bed on the one side, and the Superior on the other. We listened, and heard some one on tip-toe return to the neighbouring cell. Ah ! said I, it is Sister Theresa, who has seen you go along the passage, and enter my apartment. She must have listened and overheard our conversation. What will she

she say?..... I was more dead than alive.—Yes, it is she, said the Superior, in an irritated tone, it is she, I have no doubt; but I hope she will long remember her temerity. — Ah! dear mother, said I, do her no harm.— Susan, said she to me, adieu, good night; go to bed, sleep well; I give you a dispensation from morning prayers. I will go to that strange girl. Give me your hand... I stretched out my hand from one side of the bed to the other; she lifted the sleeve which covered the arm, and kissed it with a sigh, and she went away, protesting that the rash girl who had dared to trouble her, should remember it. I immediately leant towards the side of my bed next the door, and listened. She went to Sister Theresa's apartment. I had a strong inclination to rise and interpose between her and the Superior, if any

violent scene happened to ensue ; but I was so troubled, my feelings were so unpleasant, that I preferred lying still in bed ; I could not sleep ; however, I thought that I was about to become the topic of conversation in the house ; that this adventure, which in itself was very simple, would be related with the most unfavourable circumstances ; that it would give rise to calumnies still worse than those I was exposed to at Longchamp, when I was accused of crimes of which I am ignorant ; that our fault would come to the knowledge of the Superiors ; that our mother would be deposed, and that both of us would be severely punished. I still, however, kept my ears upon the watch, with impatience, till our mother should leave Theresa's cell. This affair seemed difficult to accommodate, for she spent there almost the whole night. How I pitied

pitied her! She was only covered with her shift, and chilled with cold, and trembling with resentment.

In the morning I had a strong desire to avail myself of the permission she had given me, and to remain in bed. It occurred to me, however, that I ought not to do so. I dressed myself in haste, and was the first at the choir, where the Superior and Saint Theresa did not appear; a circumstance at which I was highly pleased; in the first place, because I should have had no small difficulty to support the looks of this sister without embarrassment; and in the second place, since she had obtained permission to be absent from service, she had in all probability obtained forgiveness, which would not be granted but upon conditions calculated to render my mind perfectly easy. I guessed right. No sooner was service over, than

than the Superior sent for me. I went and saw her. She was still in bed, and seemed depressed. I have been very ill, said she, I have not slept at all; Saint Theresa is out of her senses; if she does such a thing again, I will confine her.—Ah! dear mother, said I, do not think of confining her.—That will depend upon her own conduct. She has promised to behave better, and I hope she will keep her word. And you, dear Susan, how are you?—Well, dear mother.—Have you enjoyed any repose?—Very little.—I was told that you were at the choir; why did you not remain in bed? I should not have found myself easy there; and besides, I thought it was better....—No, there would have been no harm, although you had not gone out. But I feel some inclination to sleep; I advise you to go and do the same in your cell, unless you prefer accepting

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cepting a place beside me.—Dear mother, I am infinitely obliged to you; I am accustomed to lie alone, and I could not sleep along with another.—Go then. I will not go down to the refectory to dinner. I shall be served here, and perhaps I may not rise all day.—You will come along with some others whom I have invited.—And is Sister Saint Theresa to be here, said I?—No, she replied.—I am not sorry for that.—And why?—I don't know, I seem as if I were afraid to meet her.—Courage, my child; I will answer for it, that she is more afraid of you than you have reason to be of her.

I left the room, and went to bed myself. In the afternoon I repaired to the Superior's apartment, where I found a pretty numerous company of nuns, the youngest and handsomest in the house. The rest had paid their visits and retired.

retired. I assure you, Sir, who are yourself a judge of painting, that the assemblage presented a very agreeable picture. Conceive to yourself a group of between ten and twelve persons, the youngest of which might be about fifteen, and the oldest not twenty-three ; a Superior bordering upon forty, fair, ruddy, plump, half raised up in her bed, with a double chin, which became her extremely ; arms round as if they had been turned ; fingers taper and interspersed with dimples ; two black eyes, large, lively and tender, seldom quite open, half shut, as if she to whom they belonged had felt some difficulty in opening them ; lips that displayed the vermillion of the rose ; teeth white as milk ; the most beautiful cheeks ; a very pleasing head, sunk in a pillow of down ; her arms extended carelessly by her sides, and little cushions
to

to support her elbows. I was seated on the edge of the bed, doing nothing; another in an arm chair, with a small embroidery frame upon her knee. Others, near the windows, were employed in working lace. Some were seated on the ground, upon the cushions they had taken from the chairs, sewing, embroidering, or spinning on small wheels. Some were fair, others brown; no one resembled another, though all were beautiful. Their characters were as various as their physiognomies. Some were serene, others sprightly, others serious, sad or melancholy. They were all engaged in some kind of work, as I have mentioned, except myself. It was not difficult to discover who were friends, who indifferent, and who enemies. The friends were placed beside or opposite to each other. As they worked, they talked, they consulted; they

they looked by stealth at each other, and pressed each others fingers, on pretence of lending a needle, a pin, or the scissars. The Superior surveyed them all ; she blamed one for assiduity ; another for idleness ; this for her indifference, that for her sadness ; she made them bring her their work ; she praised or blamed ; she adjusted the head-dress of one. . . . That veil comes too much forward. . . . That cap encroaches too much upon the face, it does not display enough of your cheeks. . . . These folds have a bad effect. . . . And upon all she bestowed either slight reproofs or little endearments.

While we were thus employed, I heard a gentle knock at the door, and I went to it. Saint Susan, said the Superior, you will return.—Yes, dear mother.—Do not fail, for I have something of importance to communicate to you.

you.—I come back this moment.... It was poor Saint Theresa. She remained a few moments without speaking, and so did I ; at last, Dear sister said I, is it I you wish to see ?—Yes.—In what manner can I be of service to you ?—I will tell you. I have fallen into disgrace with the Superior. I thought she had forgiven me, and I had some reason to think so ; yet you are all assembled in her apartment, I am not of the party, and have received orders to remain in my cell.—Do you wish to join us ?—Yes.—Are you anxious that I should solicit permission for you ?—Yes.—Stop there, my dear friend ; I will go for that purpose.—Sincerely, will you speak to her in my favour ?—Certainly ; why should I refuse to promise you so, and why should I not fulfil my promise after it is given ?—Ah ! said she, gazing tenderly upon me, I forgive, I forgive her

her the attachment she has conceived to you ; you possess every charm, a beautiful mind as well as a lovely form. . . . I was transported to have it in my power to confer upon her this little piece of service. I re-entered the room. In my absence another had taken my place on the side of the Superior's bed. She was leaning forwards, her two elbows supported upon the cushions, showing her work. The Superior, with eyes almost shut, said yes and no, almost without looking at it ; and I was standing by her side before she perceived me. She soon recovered, however, from this slight fit of absence. She who had taken my place resigned it to me ; I resumed my seat, and then leaning gently towards the Superior, who had raised herself a little upon the pillow, I preserved silence ; but I looked at her with an expression that seemed desirous to ask her
some

some favour. Well, said she, what is the matter? Speak, what is it you wish? Do you think it possible for me to refuse any thing you ask?—Sister Saint Theresa. . . .—I understand; I am much dissatisfied with her, but Saint Susan intercedes, and I grant her pardon. Go, tell her she may come in.—I ran to find her. The poor dear sister waited at the door. I told her to advance. She did so, trembling, and with downcast eyes; she held a long piece of muslin fixed to a frame, which dropped from her hands at the first step. I gathered it up, took her by the hand, and led her to the Superior. She knelt down upon her knees, took one of her hands, which she kissed, sighed, and dropped a tear. She then took one of mine, joined it to the Superior's, and kissed them both. The Superior made a sign to her to rise and place herself

wherever she pleased. She obeyed. A collation was served up. The Superior rose ; she did not sit down to table along with us, but she walked round, laying her hand upon the head of one, gently turning it back and kissing her brow ; lifting the neckkerchief of another, placing her hand upon her bosom, and leaning on the back of the chair ; passing to a third, embracing her with one hand carelessly thrown round her neck, or laying it on her mouth ; tasting, with the tip of her lips, the delicacies that were served up, and then distributing them among her favourites. After going round in this manner awhile, she stopped opposite to me, surveying me with looks of affection and tenderness. The rest of the nuns, especially 'Sister Saint Theresa, had fixed their eyes upon the ground, as if fearful of constraining or withdrawing her attention. The collation being finished,

nished,

nished, I sat down to the harpsichord, and accompanied two Sisters, who sung without method, but with taste, correctness, and voice. I sung also, and accompanied myself. The Superior was seated at the foot of the harpsichord, and seemed to enjoy the most exquisite pleasure in seeing and hearing me. The rest stood and listened, without doing any thing, or resumed their work. The evening was spent very delightfully. When it was over, all retired.

I was going away with the rest, but the Superior stopped me. What o'clock is it? said she to me.—Just six.—Some of our discreet Sisters are coming. I have reflected upon what you told me of your departure from Longchamp. I have communicated to them my ideas upon the subject, which have received their approbation, and we have a proposal to make you. . . .—At six o'clock

these discreet ladies appeared ; the discretion that is to be found in religious houses, is always very old and very decrepid. I rose ; they sat down ; and the Superior said to me, Sister Saint Susan, did you not inform me that you owe to the kindness of M. Manouri the dowry with which you were established here ?—Yes, dear mother.—I am then correct ; and the Sisters of Longchamp have remained in possession of the dowry you paid them when you entered the house ?—Yes, dear mother. — They allow you no annuity ?—No, dear mother.—That is unjust. This is the circumstance which I have communicated to these ladies, and they are of opinion with me, that you have a right either to sue them for restitution of that dowry, to be applied to the use of our house, or for the interest of it. What you derive from the solicitude
M. Manouri

M. Manouri has displayed for your happiness, is perfectly distinct from the claims you have upon the Sisters of Longchamp. It was not to acquit them of the obligation, that he furnished you the dowry.—I do not believe that he did; but the shortest way to ascertain the point, is to write to him.—Certainly.—But in case his answer be such as we wish, the following are the proposals we have to make to you. We institute the action in your name against the house of Longchamp; ours will pay the expence, which will not be very considerable, because in all probability M. Manouri will not refuse to undertake the conduct of the business; and and if we gain, the house will share equally with you the capital or the interest. What is your opinion, dear sister? You make no answer, you seem thoughtful.—I am thinking that the Sisters of Longchamp have done me

much evil; and I should be sorry were they to imagine that I wished for revenge.—Revenge is out of the question; the matter is to reclaim what is your just right.---Present myself again a public spectacle!---That is the least inconvenience; you will scarce ever be mentioned. And besides, this community is poor, and that of Longchamp is rich. You will be our benefactress, at least as long as you live; we do not require that motive to interest us in your preservation, we all love you.... And then all these discreet ladies whom she had brought to the consultation exclaimed together, And who would not love her? She is perfect.... Every moment I am in danger of being cut off; another Superior would not perhaps entertain for you the same sentiments that I do; ah! no surely she would not. You may have little indispositions, little wants; it is very pleasant

pleasant to have some money which you can apply either to render you comfortable, or to confer kindness upon others. ---Dear mother, said I, these considerations are not to be neglected, since you have the goodness to suggest them; there are others which touch me more, but there is no point of repugnance which I am not prepared to sacrifice to you. The only favour I have to ask of you, dear mother, is to take no steps till you have conversed with M. Manouri in my presence. ---Nothing is more proper. Will you write to him yourself? ---Just as you please, dear mother. ---Write to him then; and that we may not be obliged to go over the subject a second time, (for I am not fond of that kind of business, it teases me to death), write to him immediately. ---I instantly got pen, ink and paper; I entreated M. Manouri to be so good as

take a journey to Arpajon, as soon as business would permit; that I again had need of his advice and assistance in an affair of some importance, &c. The council assembled, read and approved this letter, and it was dispatched.

M. Manouri came a few days after. The Superior explained to him the question. Without a moment's hesitation he assented to her opinion. My scruples were treated as absurd. It was determined that the nuns of Longchamp should be summoned next day. They were summoned accordingly; and in spite of all I could do, my name again appeared in memorials, in cases, in public hearings, and that with details, insinuations and falsehoods, and every kind of foul aspersion that could render a cause unfavourable in the opinion of the Judges, and odious in the eyes of the world. But, Sir, is it really the
privilege

privilege of advocates to calumniate as much as they please? Is there no justice to be obtained among them? Could I have foreseen all the vexations which this suit was to involve, I protest to you that I would not have consented to its being undertaken. They were careful to send to several nuns of our house the pieces which were published against me. Every moment they came to enquire into the details of horrible events, which had not the shadow of truth. The more I appeared ignorant, the more I was deemed guilty. Because I explained nothing, and denied nothing, they believed it all to be true. They made oblique, but very offensive observations. They shrugged their shoulders at my innocence. I wept, I was afflicted beyond measure.

But calamity never comes single. The time of confession arrived. I had
already

already accused myself of the first caresses which the Superior had bestowed upon me, and the Director had most expressly prohibited me from yielding to them in future. But how is it possible to refuse favours, which are attended with the highest pleasure to another on whom you are entirely dependant, and in which you yourself are not conscious of any criminality ?

The Director, having a conspicuous part to perform in the sequel of these memoirs, I conceive it will not be improper to acquaint you with his character.

He is a Cordelier, and his name is Father Lemoine. He is not above forty years of age. He possesses one of the finest physiognomies in the world. It is mild, serene, open, sprightly, agreeable, when he is not at pains to modify its appearance ; but when he is
anxious

anxious to adjust his countenance, his brow becomes wrinkled, he knits his eye-brows, fixes his eyes upon the ground, and infuses an austerity into his whole carriage. I don't know two men more different than Father Lemoine at the altar, and Father Lemoine in the parlour ; and Father Lemoine in the parlour alone, and in company. Indeed this feature is common to the character of all religious persons whatever. I have even frequently caught myself when going to the grate, stopping short, adjusting my veil, my cap, composing my countenance, my eyes, my mouth, my hands, my arms, my carriage, and assuming a borrowed modesty and demeanour, which continued longer or shorter, according to the persons with whom I had to converse. Father Lemoine is tall, handsome, gay, and extremely amiable, when he is easy ;

easy ; his elocution is admirable. In the house to which he belongs he has the reputation of a profound theologian ; and in the world, that of a great preacher. His conversation is enchanting. He is a man possessed of an infinite variety of knowledge unconnected with his profession. He has an exquisite voice ; he is skilled in music, history and languages. He is a Doctor of the Sorbonne. Although he is young, he has passed through all the principal dignities of his Order. I believe him to be free from intrigue and ambition ; he is beloved by his associates. He solicited the place of Superior of the house of Etampes as a tranquil situation, where he could apply himself without avocations to some studies which he had begun, and he succeeded in his application. It is a point of great importance
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for a religious house to make a proper choice of a confessor. They ought to have as a director, a man of importance and distinction. Every exertion was made by the house of Arpajon to obtain Father Lemoine; and they obtained him, at least in the capacity of extraordinary director.

The carriage belonging to the house was dispatched for him on the eve of the grand festivals, and he came. It was entertaining to see the agitation which his expected arrival produced through the whole community; what joy it excited! how the nuns shut themselves up! how they laboured to prepare themselves for his examination! how they studied to occupy him as long as possible.

It was on the eve of the feast of Pentecost that he was expected. I was uneasy; the Superior observed it, and spoke

spoke to me on the subject. I did not conceal from her the cause of my anxiety : she appeared still more alarmed at the circumstance than I was, although she did every thing in her power to dissemble her apprehension. She treated Father Lemoine as a fantastic character ; ridiculed his scruples ; asked me if Father Lemoine knew more with regard to the innocence of her sentiments and mine, than our own consciences ; and whether mine gave me any reproaches. I answered that it did not. Very well then, said she, I am your Superior, you are bound to obey me ; and I command you not to speak to him of these foolish things. You need not go to confession, if you have nothing but trifles to reveal.

Father Lemoine, however, arrived ; and I was preparing for confession while he was already occupied with the nuns
who

who had been most forward to engage him. My turn was coming; when the Superior came to me, drew me aside, and said, Saint Susan, I have reflected upon what you told me; return to your cell, I wish you not to go to confession to day.—And why, dear mother? replied I.—To-morrow is a great day; it is the day of general communion: what thoughts do you imagine will be entertained of me, if I am the only person that does not approach the Holy Table?—No matter; let them say what they please, but you shall not go to confession.—Dear mother, said I, if you really love me, do not subject me to that mortification; I entreat it as a favour.—No, no; you will occasion me some quarrel with that man, a circumstance I am desirous to avoid.—No, dear mother, I will cause you none.—Promise me then. . . . O, it is unnecessary;

sary ; to-morrow morning you will come to my chamber, and accuse yourself to me ; you have committed no fault for which I cannot assure you of reconciliation, and give you absolution ; you will then communicate with the rest. Go. . . .—I then withdrew, and remained in my cell, sad, uneasy, pensive, not knowing what course to follow, whether I should go to Father Lemoine, in spite of the Superior, whether I should content myself with her absolution next day, whether I should perform my devotions with the rest of the house, or abstain from the Sacrament, in spite of all the observations that could be made. I was in this state of mind when the Superior entered. She had been at confession ; and Father Lemoine had asked why I had not appeared, and if I was sick ? I know not what answer she returned ; but the end of the business was, that

that he waited me at the confessional. Go then, said she, since it must be so, but assure me that you will be secret. I hesitated; she insisted: Ha ! foolish girl, said she, what harm would you have to be in concealing what there is no harm in committing ?—And what harm is there, then, in telling it, replied I ?—None, but there is inconvenience. Who knows the importance which this man may attach to it ? Give me then an assurance. . . . I again hesitated, but at last I pledged myself to say nothing, if he did not question me, and went to confess.

I confessed, and was silent upon the subject; but the director questioned me, and I dissembled nothing. He proposed a thousand singular questions, of which I understand not a word, even at present, when I recall them to my remembrance. He treated me with in-

dulgence; but he expressed himself against the Superior in terms that made me shudder; he called her base, profligate, perjured nun; corrupt pernicious woman; and enjoined me, under pain of being guilty of a deadly sin, never to be alone with her, and to suffer none of her caresses.---But, my father, she is my Superior, she may enter my apartment, and call me to hers, whenever she pleases.---I know it, I know it, and it afflicts me beyond measure. Dear child, said he, praised be God who has hitherto preserved you! Without venturing to explain myself more clearly, from a fear of becoming an accomplice of your base Superior, and blasting by the poisoned breath, which, in spite of my care, might issue from my lips, a delicate flower, which is never preserved fresh and without stain till your age but by the particular protection

tection of Providence, I command you to shun your Superior, to spurn her endearments, never to enter her chamber alone, to shut your door against her, especially during the night, to quit your bed if she enters your room, in spite of her opposition, to go into the passage, if necessary, to call for help, to descend, naked as you are, to the very foot of the altar, to fill the house with your cries, and to do every thing which the love of God and a hatred of guilt, the sanctity of your situation, and the interest of your salvation could inspire, were Satan himself to appear and assail you. Yes, my child, it is under this aspect that I am constrained to represent your Superior. She is plunged in the abyss of guilt ; she endeavours to precipitate you into it likewise ; and perhaps you might already have been there along with her, if your innocence had not fil-

led her with terror, and compelled her to stop. . . . Then raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, My God, continue to protect this child. . . . Pronounce along with me, *Satana, vade retro ; apage, Satana*. If this wretch examine you, tell her all, repeat to her my conversation ; say to her, that it would have been better if she had never been born, or that she would by a violent death precipitate herself into the infernal gulph.—But, my father, replied I, you have but just now heard her confession !—He returned me no answer ; but breathing a profound sigh, he laid one of his hands upon the arm of the confessional, upon which he leant his head in the attitude of a person penetrated with grief. He remained sometime in this posture. I knew not what to think ; my knees shook under me ; I was overwhelmed with an agitation
and

and disorder which it is impossible to describe. I was in the situation of a traveller, who, covered with the shades of night, wanders among precipices which he does not see; and who every moment is alarmed by the sound of voices, crying, You are undone! Surveying me then with an air more tranquil, yet blended with anxiety and affection, he said, Do you enjoy good health? — Yes, my father. — Would you be very much injured by the want of a night's sleep? — No, my father. — Very well, you shall not go to bed this night. Accordingly, after you have taken your refreshment, you will repair to church, prostrate yourself at the feet of the altar, and pass the night in prayer; you know not the danger to which you have been exposed; you will return thanks to God for having preserved you safe; and to-morrow you will ap-

proach the Holy Table with all the other nuns. The only penance I prescribe for you, is to keep yourself at a distance from your Superior, and to repel her poisoned caresses. Go. I will also join my prayers with yours. What terrible uneasiness must your situation occasion me! I am aware of all the consequences which the advice I give you will produce, but it is a duty which I owe to you, and to myself. God is master, and we have but one law.

I recollect but very imperfectly, Sir, all that he said. At present, when I compare his conversation, as I have detailed it to you, with the terrible impression which it produced upon my mind, I discover no resemblance, but this must be because my account is mutilated and unconnected; because many points are omitted which have escaped my memory; because I annexed

nexed to them no distinct idea ; and : because I could discover, and still can perceive, no importance in circumstances upon which he declaimed with the greatest violence. For instance, what is there so extraordinary in the harpsichord scene ? Are there not many persons upon whom music produces the most violent effects ? I myself have been told, that certain airs, certain modulations, entirely changed my physiognomy : at these moments I was transported quite beyond myself ; I knew not what I did ; yet for all this I do not believe I was the less innocent. Why might not the case have been the same with my Superior, who, in spite of all her follies, and all her inequalities, was certainly a woman of the most exquisite sensibility ? She could not hear a story at all affecting without melting into tears ; when I recounted

to her the events of my life, she was touched to a degree that would have inspired compassion. Why was not the commiseration which she testified, also urged against her as a crime ? and the night scene, the event of which he waited to hear with such deadly apprehension ? Certainly this man is too rigid.

I, nevertheless, punctually performed what he had prescribed ; the immediate consequences of which he had undoubtedly foreseen. As soon as I left the confessional I went and prostrated myself at the feet of the altar ; my head was distracted with terror ; and there I remained till supper. The Superior, uneasy about me, had sent to call me, and she was answered that I was engaged in prayer. Several times she appeared at the door of the choir, but I affected not to perceive her. When
5 the

the hour of supper arrived, I repaired to the refectory ; I hastily finished supper, and immediately returned to the church. I did not attend the evening's recreation, and at the time of retiring to bed, I did not return to my apartment. The Superior was not ignorant how I was engaged. The night was far advanced ; silence reigned throughout the house, when she came down to me. The image under which the Director had painted her, recurred to my imagination, terror shook my limbs, I durst not look at her. I believed I was to see her with a hideous countenance, and all wrapped in flames. I said to myself, *Satana, vade retrò, apage Satana* ; My God, preserve me from this fiend.

She fell upon her knees, and after praying for some time, she said, Saint Susan, what are you doing here ?—

Madam,

Madam, you see.—Do you know what o'clock it is?—Yes, Madam.---Why did you not retire to your apartment at the appointed time?---Because I am preparing to celebrate to-morrow, the great day.---Your design then was to pass the night here.---Yes, Madam.—And who gave you permission?—It was the Director's command.—The Director has no authority to impose any command contrary to the rules of the house; and I command you to go to bed.—Madam, it is the penance he has prescribed.—You must substitute in its place some other performances.—That does not depend upon my choice.—Come, my child, come. The damps of the church during the night will affect your health; you will pray in your cell. . . . She then attempted to lay hold of my hand, but I shrunk back swiftly. You fly me! said she.—Yes, Madam, I fly

I fly you.... My courage being in some measure restored by the sanctity of the place, by the presence of the divinity, by the innocence of my heart, I ventured to raise my eyes and look at her; but no sooner had I perceived her, than I uttered a loud shriek, and ran round the choir like a person distracted, crying, Be gone from me, Satan!... She did not follow; she remained in her place; and stretching out her arms to me, she said, in a voice the most tender and the most affecting, What is the matter with you? Whence arises this affright? Stop, I am not Satan, I am your Superior and your friend:.... I stopped, and turned my head towards her, and perceived that I had been terrified by a whimsical appearance which my imagination had realized. She was placed in such a position with regard to the lamp, which

hung from the roof of the church, that the light only shone upon her face and the extremity of her hands, while the rest remained in the shade, which displayed her in a very singular aspect. Having a little regained my courage, I threw myself into a pew. She approached, and was about to seat herself in the neighbouring one, when I rose and placed myself in the pew below. I travelled in this manner from pew to pew, till I reached the very last; I then stopped and conjured her to leave at least one vacant space between us. With all my heart, said she. We then both sat down, a single pew separating us. The Superior then, beginning the conversation, said, May we know, Saint Susan, whence arises this terror which my presence inspires?---Dear mother, it is not I, it is Father Lemoine. He represented the tenderness you entertain

tain for me, and the endearments you bestow, and in which I confess I comprehend nothing improper, under the most hideous colours. He commanded me to shun you, never to enter your apartment alone, to leave my cell should you come there. In short, he has painted you to my mind as the infernal demon. I cannot tell you all he said to me on that subject.—You have then spoken to him?—No, dear mother, but I could not avoid answering him.—So, I am then very frightful in your eyes?—No, dear mother, it is impossible for me not to love you, not to feel all the value of your kindness, not to intreat you still to continue it; but I will obey my director.—You will come to see me no more?—I will not, dear mother.—You will no more admit me to your cell?—I will not, dear mother.—You will reject my caresses?—

It

It will cost me a struggle to submit to that injunction, for my natural temper is prone to endearments, and I love to be caressed, but it must be. I promised to my director that I would reject your endearments, and I confirmed it by an oath at the feet of the altar. Could I but describe to you the manner in which he explained himself! He is a man of piety, a man of learning; and what interest could he have in pointing out to me dangers where they do not exist, in estranging the heart of a nun from the heart of her Superior? But, perhaps, in actions extremely innocent both upon your part and mine, he discovers a germ of secret corruption, which he imagines already developed in you, and which he fears lest you should develope in me. I will confess to you, that when I recollect the impressions which I have sometimes experienced, . . .

rienced.... Upon my leaving you and returning to my cell, why, my dear mother, was I agitated and thoughtful? Why could I neither pray nor work? Whence arose that kind of listlessness which I had never before felt? Why did I, who never sleep in the day-time, feel myself overpowered with slumbers? I conceive that in you it was a contagious distemper, the effects of which began to be displayed in me; but Father Lemoine considers it in a very different light.—And in what light does he consider the subject?—He considers it as attended with all the foulness and all the horrors of guilt; your destruction already consummated, mine likewise contrived. I know not all the extent of the criminality which he discovers.—Poh, said she, this Father Lemoine is is nothing but a visionary; this is not the first prank of a similar nature which he

he has played me. That I attach myself to any one with a tender friendship is enough to set him a going in order to turn her head. He had very nearly reduced that poor girl, Saint Theresa, to a state of madness. I begin to get tired of this nonsense, and I must rid myself of this troublesome man. Besides, he lives ten leagues off, and it is no small trouble to prevail upon him to come, nor can he be had when we wish his attendance.* But we will speak of this more at our ease. Won't you go up stairs?—No, dear mother, I request it of you as a favour, to allow me to pass the night here. Were I to fail in the performance of this duty, I should be afraid to partake of the sacraments with the rest of the community. But you, dear mother, do you intend to join the communion?—Doubtless.—Father Lemoine then has said nothing to you? —No.

—No.—But how did that happen?—
Because I gave him no opportunity of speaking to me. We only go to confession to accuse ourselves of the sins we have committed, and I do not consider in that light, the tender affection I bear to a girl so amiable as Saint Susan. If this is attended with any fault, it consists in my centering in her alone, a sentiment which ought to be diffused over all the members of the community ; but it is not in my power to give the direction to my attachments. I cannot prevent myself from treating merit with distinction where it exists, and from clinging to it with the ardour of preference. I ask pardon of God for it ; and I cannot conceive how your Father Lemoine can discover that my damnation is sealed in a partiality so natural, and against which it is so difficult to guard. I endeavour to contri-

bute to the happiness of all ; but there are some whom I esteem and whom I love more than others, because they are more amiable and more estimable. Such then is the whole of the crime I have committed with you : Saint Susan, do you consider it as very enormous ?—No, dear mother.—Come, dear child, let each of us say a short prayer, and then retire.—I entreated her anew to permit me to pass the night in the church : she consented, upon condition that it was never to be repeated, and then withdrew.

I reflected upon what she had said to me. I supplicated the Almighty to illuminate my understanding ; I weighed every circumstance ; and concluded, that upon the whole, although persons were of the same sex, the manner in which they testified their mutual friendship, might at least be indecent ; that Father Lemoine,

Lemoine, a person of austere character, had perhaps exaggerated matters, but that the advice to shun the extreme familiarity of my Superior, by maintaining a great deal of reserve, was very proper to be followed; and I accordingly laid down a resolution to that effect.

In the morning, when the nuns came to the choir, they joined me in my place. They all sat down at the holy Table, with the Superior at their head. This circumstance served completely to convince me of her innocence, without, however, inducing me to swerve from the conduct I had resolved to pursue. Besides, I was very far from feeling towards her all that force of attraction which she experienced in my favour. I could not forbear comparing her with my first Superior. What a difference! She had neither the same piety, nor the

gravity, nor the same dignity, nor the same fervour, nor the same judgement, nor the same taste for order.

In the short space of a few days there occurred two very important events; the one was, gaining my process against the nuns of Longchamp, who were condemned to pay to the house of Saint Eutrope, where I now was, a pension proportionate to my dowry; the other was, a change of the Director. It was the Superior herself who informed me of the last occurrence.

I no longer went to her cell unaccompanied, nor did she visit mine alone. She was always in quest of me, but I took care to shun her; she perceived the distance I observed to her, and reproached me with it. I know not what passed in her heart, but it must have been something extraordinary. She rose in the night, and walked

walked in the corridors, particularly in mine; I heard her often pass and re-pass, stop at my door, complain and sigh; I was afraid, and I would cover myself over with my bed-clothes. In the day time, if I happened to be on the promenade, in the hall for working, or in the room for recreation, she spent whole hours gazing on me, in such a way as I could not observe her; she watched every step I took; if I went down stairs, I met her at the bottom of the stair-case; and when I went up again, she was waiting at the top. One day she stopped me; she looked at me without saying a word; the tears rushed from her eyes; then, all of a sudden, throwing herself upon the ground, and grasping my knee with her hands, she said to me: 'Cruel sister, ask my life, and I will give it you; but do not shun me, I cannot live without you.... Her

situation excited my compassion ; her eyes were sunk, her countenance was become pale and meagre. I recollected she was my Superior ; she lay at my feet, with her head leaning against my knee, which she held in her embrace ; I stretched out my hands, she seized them with ardour ; she kissed them, and then looked at me ; kissed them a second time, and looked at me again ; I raised her up. She trembled, and could scarcely walk ; I conducted her back to her cell. When her door was opened, she took me by the hand, and gently pulled me, to make me go in, but without either speaking or looking at me. No, said I, my dear mother, no ; I am under promise to myself, and it will be better for us both that I keep it ; I occupy too a large place in your heart, it is so much lost to God, to whom you owe it all.—And does it become you
to

to reproach me with it?...—I endeavoured, while I was speaking to her, to disengage my hand from hers.—You will not come in then? said she.—No, my dear mother, no.—You will not, Saint Susan? but you do not know what will be the consequence to me; no, you do not know it; I shall die.....—These last words inspired me with a sentiment quite opposite to that which she supposed; I wrested my hand from her, and ran off. She turned about, and followed me with her eyes for a little way, then returned into her cell, and, without shutting the door, uttered the most doleful lamentations. I heard them; they penetrated my soul; I was in doubt, for a moment, whether I should remain apart, or whether I should return; some repulsive emotions, however, determined me to remain, but not without feeling severely the

state in which I left her; for I am naturally compassionate. I shut myself up in my cell; I found myself uneasy; I was at a loss how to employ myself; I took some turns in the apartment, distracted and vexed; I went out and returned; at last I went and knocked at my neighbour Saint Theresa's door. She was in close conversation with another young nun; I said to her: Dear sister, I am sorry to interrupt you, but I pray you to excuse me for one moment, I have a single word to say to you.... She followed me to my cell, and I told her that our mother Superior was in great distress; that I did not know what was the cause of it; but that if she would go and see her, perhaps she might console her.... She made no reply, but leaving her friend in her cell, shut her door, and ran to visit the Superior.

This

This woman's malady grew worse and worse every day; she became melancholy and serious; the gaiety which had incessantly prevailed from the time of my coming to the house, all of a sudden disappeared; every thing assumed an aspect of austerity; service was performed with becoming dignity; strangers were almost entirely excluded from the parlour; the nuns were prohibited from visiting one another; religious exercises were resumed with the most scrupulous exactness; there were no more meetings at the Superiors, no more afternoon parties; the most trifling faults were punished with the utmost rigour; they still sometimes applied to me to procure a pardon, but I absolutely refused to ask it. The cause of this revolution was a secret to no one. The old nuns were little disturbed by it, but it grieved the young ones,

3 ones,

ones, and made them regard me with an evil eye: as for myself, satisfied with my conduct, I was equally indifferent to their ill-humour and their reproaches.

This Superior, whom I could neither relieve nor refrain from pitying, passed successively from melancholy to piety, and from piety to madness. To follow her through all the different stages of her course would involve me in an endless detail; I shall only mention, that in her first state, she sometimes sought for me, and sometimes shunned me; at one time she would treat us with her accustomed tenderness, at another time she would exercise the utmost severity; she would call and then dismiss us; grant recreation, and in a moment after revoke the order; summon us to attend the choir, and, when we were preparing to obey, by a second toll of the bell, shut

shut the whole society up in their cells. It is difficult to conceive the restless life she led ; the day was passed in going to her cell, and returning ; in taking up her breviary and laying it down ; in going up and down stairs ; in dropping, and in lifting up her veil. The night was subject to almost as many interruptions as the day.

Some of the nuns applied to me, and gave me to understand, that by shewing a little more complaisance and respect to the Superior, every thing would be restored to the wonted order, or rather the wonted disorder ; I answered them, sorrowfully : I pity you, but tell me plainly what it is that I must do ?..... Some of them turned away, hanging down their heads, without making any reply ; others gave me advice which it was impossible to reconcile with those of my Director ; I

mean

mean of him they had recalled, for we had not yet seen his successor.

The Superior went out no more at night; she passed whole weeks without going either to service, to the choir, to the dining-room, or to the hall of recreation; she lived shut up in her chamber; she wandered in the corridors, or went down to the church; she went about knocking at the doors of the nuns, and saying to them in a plaintive voice: Sister such a one, pray for me; Sister such another, pray for me..... A report spread, that she was disposed to make a general confession.

One day, when I went down first to the church, I saw a piece of paper fixed to the curtain of the rail; I went and read it: "Dear sisters, you are invited
" to pray for a nun who has strayed
" from the path of duty, and who
" wishes to return to God..." I was
tempted

tempted to tear it, but I let it remain. Some days after, there was another, with the following inscription: “Dear
“ sisters, you are desired to implore
“ the mercy of God upon a nun, who
“ is sensible of her wanderings; they
“ are many....” Another day, there was another invitation: “Dear sisters,
“ you are entreated to pray God to
“ deliver a nun from despair, who has
“ lost all confidence in the divine
“ mercy.....”

These invitations, in which were painted the cruel vicissitudes of a mind in pain, threw me into a profound melancholy. While I was looking on some occasion at one of these placards, I asked myself, what are these wanderings with which she reproaches herself? whence proceed the pangs of this woman? what crimes can she have committed? I recollected the exclamations

mations of the Director ; I recalled his expressions ; I endeavoured to find out their meaning ; I could not understand them ; I became, as it were, absorbed. Some of the nuns, who observed me, began to talk with one another about me ; and, if I am not mistaken, they considered me as threatened with the same terrors by which the Superior was afflicted.

This poor Superior never looked from under her veil ; she took no part in the affairs of the house ; she never spoke to any body, excepting the new Director, with whom she had frequent interviews : he was a young Benedictine. I know not whether he enjoined all the mortifications which she practised ; she fasted three days in the week ; she macerated herself ; she heard service in the inferior stalls ; we passed her door in going to church ; there we would
find

find her prostrated, with her face upon the ground; she refused to rise in any person's presence. At night, she went down stairs barefooted and in her shift; if Saint Theresa or I happened to meet her, she returned, and put her face against the wall. One day, on going out of my cell, I found her prostrate, with her arms stretched out, and her face reclining upon the ground; she said to me, Advance, walk over me, tread upon me, I deserve no better treatment:

In the course of the three months that she laboured under this malady, the rest of the community had conceived a strong aversion to me. I shall not again enter into a detail of all the disagreeable circumstances which a nun, hated in her convent, is subjected to; you are already acquainted with them. I perceived my disgust at my situation
4 returning.

returning. I communicated this disgust, and all my troubles to the new Director ; his name was Don Morel ; he was a man near forty, of a warm temper. He seemed to listen to me with attention and with interest ; he desired to know the occurrences of my life ; he made me enter into a most minute detail of my family, my inclinations, my character, the houses in which I had lived, that in which I now was, and what had passed between me and the Superior. I told him all, without any concealment. He seemed to attach less importance to the conduct of the Superior than Father Lemoine did ; he said only a few words upon it, and that with apparent reluctance ; he considered the matter as over ; what affected him most were my secret dispositions with respect to the religious life. In proportion as I opened myself to him, he returned my confidence

confidence by making similar disclosures on his part ; if I made confession to him, he reposed trust in me ; what he told me of his trouble had a perfect conformity to what I had experienced ; he had entered into the religious state from compulsion ; he supported his condition with the same disgust, and had the same complaints against it as myself. But, my dear Sister, added he, what can be done ? there is only one resource, namely, to render our lot as little distressing as we can. And then he gave me the same counsels that he followed ; they were prudent ; but he proceeded to remark that we cannot avoid chagrin, and all we can do is to bear up under it. Religious persons are happy in proportion as they can make a merit before God of their sufferings : when they can do this, they are matter of joy to them ; they court mortifications

above all things ; the more bitter and frequent they are, the happier they find themselves ; they exchange present, for future felicity, and secure the latter by a voluntary sacrifice of the former. After suffering much, they say to God, *Amplius, Domine* ; More still, good Lord.... a prayer which God takes care to answer. But though we suffer the same pains with them, we cannot promise ourselves the same recompence, because we want the only thing which confers any value upon them, resignation ; it is a melancholy fact. Alas ! how shall I inspire you with that virtue in which you are deficient, and which I do not possess ? Without this we are exposed to destruction in the world to come, after being miserable in the present. After living in penance, we shall as surely be damned, as those who pass through this life in

the midst of pleasures ; we subject ourselves to mortification ; they indulge in enjoyment, and in the end the same punishment awaits both. How miserable the condition of a monk or nun, who has had no call to the religious life ! it is ours however, and we cannot change it. They have loaded us with galling chains, which we are doomed to support, without hope of breaking ; let us try, my dear Sister, to drag them. Go, I shall return, and see you again.

He returned in a few days after ; I saw him in the parlour. The history of our lives, which we mutually disclosed, presented an infinite number of circumstances which formed between us so many points of contact, and of remonstrance : he had been subjected to almost the same domestic and religious persecutions that I had undergone. I did not imagine that the picture

of his disgust was at all calculated to dissipate mine ; it produced this effect however in me, and I believe the communication of my disgust produced the same effect in him. Thus, from a resemblance of character, united with a correspondence in events, the more we reviewed ourselves, the more we were pleased with each other ; the history of his moments was the history of mine ; the history of his sentiments was the history of mine ; the history of his heart was the history of mine.

After we were tired with speaking about ourselves, we conversed about others, particularly the Superior. The situation he held as Director rendered him extremely reserved : I discovered, however, from the tenor of his conversation, that the present temper of this woman could not last long ; that she was vainly struggling with herself. Oh, that one of

two things would be the consequence ! either that she would revert to her former habits, or that she would lose her judgement. I had the strongest curiosity to know more ; he could easily have resolved those questions which I had never been able to answer myself, but I did not make free to interrogate him ; I ventured only to ask if he knew Father Lemoine ?—Yes, said he, he is a very deserving man, very much so indeed.—We no longer see him as we used to do.—No ? Can you tell me the reason ?—I should be sorry if it transpired.—You may rely upon my discretion.—They have written against him, I believe, to the Archbishop.—And what could they say against him ?—That he lived at too great a distance from the house ; that they could not get him when he wanted ; that his morality was too severe ; that they had some reason

to suspect him of entertaining innovating sentiments ; and that he disseminated a factious spirit in the house, and estranged the minds of the nuns from their Superior.—And how do you come to know this ?—I have it from himself.—You have seen him then ?—Yes, I have seen him ; he has spoken to me sometimes about you.—What did he say ?—That you was much to be pitied ; that he could not conceive how you have been able to support all the hardships you have undergone ; that though he had only an opportunity of conversing with you once or twice, he did not believe that ever you would accommodate yourself to the religious life ; that he had a mind.....Here he stopped short ; and I added, What had he a mind to do ?—Don Morel replied, It is an affair of private confidence, which I am not at liberty to disclose....

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I did not insist; I said only, it is very true that it was Father Lemoine who made me estrange myself from my Superior.—He was right in so doing.—Why?—Sister, replied she, with a serious air, follow his counsels, and remain ignorant, as long as you live, of the reason which dictated them.—But it appears to me that, if I knew the danger, I should be more attentive in shunning it.—Perhaps the contrary might be the case.—You must have a very bad opinion of me.—I have that opinion of your morals and of your innocence, which they naturally inspire; but believe me, there is a fatal insight which you cannot acquire without being corrupted by it. It is your innocence which has wrought upon your Superior; had you been better informed, she would have respected you less.—I don't understand you.—So much the better.

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—But how can the familiarities and the caresses of a woman be dangerous to one of her own sex?—No reply on the part of Don Morel.—Am I not the same as when I came here?—Still no reply on the part of Don Morel.—Should I not have continued the same? Where then is the harm of loving her, of telling her so, and of giving her expressions of it? It is so pleasant!—Very true, said Don Morel, raising his eyes, which were fixed upon the ground, while I spoke, and casting a look upon me.—And is this a malady frequent in convents? My poor Superior! into what a condition has she fallen!—It is truly afflicting, and I am afraid she will grow worse and worse. She was not made for her situation, and this is always the consequence of it sooner or later;—when we oppose the general bent of nature, the constraint gives birth

birth to ungovernable passions, which are the more violent, because they are ill-founded ; it is a sort of madness.--- Madness ?---Yes, and it will increase. —And do you think that this fate awaits all those who are bound to a state to which they were not called ?—Not all ; there are some who die beforehand ; there are others whose temper is so flexible, as in time to yield ; and there are others who are supported for a considerable time, by vague uncertain hopes :—In what hopes can a nun indulge ?—What hopes ? at first they have that of reviling their vows.—And when that fails ?—They hope that they will some day find the gates open ; that mankind will renounce the extravagance of intombing living victims in the flower of youth, and that convents will be abolished ; that the house will be burnt ; that the walls of the cloister will fall ; that
some

some one will come to their aid. All these suppositions pass in their brain, and they indulge them ; while they are walking in the garden, they look, without thinking of it, if the walls are very high ; if they are in their cells, they try if they could force the bar of the railing ; if there is a street under the windows, they fix their eyes upon it ; if they hear any person pass, their heart palpitates ; they sigh after a deliverer ; if there is any tumult, the noise of which is heard in the house, they are eager with expectation ; they reckon upon some distemper, which will render it necessary to call in a physician, or which will cause them to be sent to a watering place.—True, very true, exclaimed I, you read the bottom of my heart ; I have indulged, and I still indulge in these illusions.—And when they vanish upon reflection (for these
salutary

salutary vapours which are the offsprings of the heart, and which cloud the understanding, are at intervals dispelled) then they experience all the weight of misery ; they detest themselves, they abhor those about them, they utter cries and groans, and lamentations ; they feel the approaches of despair. Then some run and throw themselves at the feet of their Superior, seeking consolation from her ; others prostrate themselves in their cells, or before the altar, and invoke the aid of Heaven ; others rend their clothes, and tear their hair ; others go in quest of a deep well, a high window, or a noose, and sometimes they find the one or the other ; others, after enduring torments for a long time, fall into a kind of stupidity and turn silly ; others, who have more feeble and delicate organs, waste away with languor ; and there are others, whose whole system

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tem is deranged, their imagination troubled, and who become furious. The happiest are those who experience a renewal of those salutary illusions, and who are flattered and consoled by them, till their latter end ; their life is a series of alternate error and despair.—The most unhappy, apparently, added I, with a deep sigh, are those who pass through all these states in succession..... Ah ! my father, how vexed I am at what you have told me !—Why ?—I was unacquainted with what passed in my own mind ; it is now laid open to me ; and the illusions with which I pleased myself, will now vanish more quickly than before.

I was preparing to continue, when another nun entered, a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and I know not how many. The conversation became general. Some looked at the
Director,

Director, others listened to him in silence and with downcast eyes. Several of them together proposed questions to him, and all loudly extolled the wisdom of his answers. Meanwhile I had retired into a corner, where I resigned myself to a profound reverie. In the midst of these conversations, in which all endeavoured to display themselves to the best advantage, and to fix the preference of the holy man by every accomplishment they possessed, some one was heard slowly to approach, at intervals to stop and breath profound sighs. They listened, they whispered to each other, It is she, it is our Superior : they were then silent, and sat down in a circle. It was she in reality. She entered. Her veil reached down to her middle, her arms were crossed upon her breast, and her head reclining. I was the first whom she perceived.

5

ceived. At this moment she withdrew from under her veil, one of her hands with which she covered her eyes, and turning herself a little to one side with the other, she made a signal for us all to depart. We withdrew in silence, and she remained alone with Don Morel.

I am aware, Sir, that you are about to conceive a bad opinion of me, but I am not ashamed of what I have done, Why should I blush to confess it? Besides, how could I suppress, in this recital, an event which gave rise to several consequences? Say then that my mind is of a very regular cast: when the circumstances I relate are calculated to excite your esteem, or increase your commiseration, I may write well or ill; but I write with incredible ease and rapidity, my heart is gay, expressions come to me without effort, my tears
flow

flow sweetly ; I conceive that you are present, that I see you, and that you listen to me. If on the contrary I am obliged to show myself to you in an unfavourable aspect, I think with difficulty, I want expressions, my pen moves ill, the character of my writing is affected by my situation, and I only continue because I secretly flatter myself that you will not read those passages. Of this description is the following.

After all our sisters had retired. . . —
Well then ! what did you do ? — You don't guess ? No, you are too honest for that. I went down upon tiptoe, and softly took my station at the parlour door, to overhear what was said. That is very bad, you will say. . . . Oh ! as for that, agreed, it is very bad, so I said to myself ; and my agitation, the precaution I took to avoid observation, the
the

the hesitation with which I proceeded, the voice of my conscience which every moment urged me to return, would not allow a doubt of it to remain. Curiosity however proved victorious, and I went on. But if it was bad to have privily overheard the conversation of two persons, who believed themselves alone, is it not still worse to report it to you? Here again is one of those passages which I write, because I flatter myself you will not read it. I know that this is not the case, but I must nevertheless endeavour to persuade myself of its truth.

The first word I heard, after a considerable pause, made me shudder: it was, My father, I am damned. . . I again collected my spirits. I continued to listen; the veil which hitherto had concealed from me the danger I had undergone, was torn off. At this moment I
heard

heard myself called. I was obliged to go ; I retired ; yet, alas ! I had already heard but too much. What a woman, Marquis ! what an abominable woman !

Here the memoirs of Sister Susan are interrupted. What follows, are only memorandums of what she probably meant to employ in the remainder of her narration. It appears that her Superior became mad ; and to her unfortunate situation, the fragments which follow must be understood to refer.

After this confession we enjoyed several days of serenity. Joy was restored to the community, and I received compliments upon the event, which I rejected with indignation.

She no longer shunned me ; she looked at me ; nor did my presence appear to cause her any trouble. I did every thing in my power to conceal the horror with which she inspired me, since, by a

curiosity, I had obtained a better knowledge of her character.

By and by she became silent, and reserved ; she said nothing but, Yes, and No. She took solitary walks ; she refused nourishment ; her blood became inflamed ; she was seized with a fever, to which a delirium succeeded.

Alone in her bed she saw me ; she spoke to me ; she invited me to approach ; she addressed me in terms the most tender. If she heard any one walk past her chamber, she exclaimed, It is she passing, it is her step, I recollect it well ; call her in. . . . No, no, let her alone.

It is singular enough that she was never once mistaken, nor did she ever take another for me.

She would break out into loud fits of laughing, and next moment burst into tears. Our sisters surrounded her in
silence,

silence, and some of them wept along with her.

Suddenly she would exclaim, I have not been at church, I have not said my prayers. . . . I wish to rise out of bed ; I wish to be dressed ; let me be dressed. . . . If her request was refused, she added, Give me at least my breviary. . . . They gave it her, she opened it, turned over the leaves with her finger, and she continued to turn over even after she had got to the end of the book. All the while her eyes were distracted.

One night she went down to the church alone. Some of the Sisters followed her. She prostrated herself on the steps of the altar ; she groaned, sighed, and prayed aloud, went out, returned, and said, Go bring her, she is a soul so pure ! she is a creature so innocent ! If she but joined her prayers to mine. . . . Then addressing herself

to the whole community, and turning to the empty benches, she cried, Go, go, all of you, let her remain alone with me. You are not worthy to approach her ; were your voices to mingle with hers, your profane incense would corrupt before God, the purity of hers. Begone, begone..... Then she exhorted me to ask of God assistance and pardon. She thought she saw God. The heavens appeared to her to be divided by gleams of lightening, to open asunder and thunder over her head. Angels in fury descended. She trembled at the looks of the divinity. She flew round the church, precipitated herself into the obscure corners ; she implored mercy ; she fixed her face upon the ground ; in this position she fell asleep ; the cold damps of the place affected her ; she was carried back to her cell as dead.

In the morning she knew nothing of the dreadful scene that had taken place the preceding night. She would say, Where are our sisters? I no longer see any body; I am left alone in this house; they have all abandoned me, and Saint Theresa too: they have done well. Since Saint Susan is gone, I may venture out, I shall be in no danger of meeting her.... Ah! were I to meet her! but she is gone, is she not? Is it not so, is she not gone?.... Happy is the house in which she resides! She will tell all to her new Superior: what will they think of me?.... Is Saint Theresa dead? I heard the death knell all night long.... Poor girl! she is ruined for ever: it is I, it is I who have done it.... One day I shall be confronted with her. What shall I say to her? what shall I answer her?.... Oh! unhappy girl! Oh! woe is me!

At other times she would say, Are our Sisters returned? Tell them that I am very ill. . . . Raise up my pillow. . . . Unlace me. . . . I feel something here which weighs me down. . . . My head is on fire. . . . Take off my cap. . . . I wish to wash my hands. . . . Bring me water, pour, pour on still. They are white, but the foul spots of the soul cannot be wiped away. . . . I wish I were dead. I wish I had never been born, I then had never seen her.

One morning she was discovered with her feet bare, in her shirt, her hair dishevelled, howling, foaming, and running round her cell, her hands upon her ears, her eyes shut, and her body squeezed against the wall. . . . Away from that abyss! hear you those cries? These are the infernal regions; I see the flames issuing from that profound abyss; from the middle of these raging fires

fires I hear a confused sound of voices calling on me. . . . My God, have pity upon me ! Go, quick, ring the bell, assemble they community ; tell them to pray for me, I will pray also. . . . But it is hardly day yet, our sisters are asleep. . . . All night long I have never closed an eye ; I wish to sleep too, but cannot.

One of the Sisters said to her, Madam, some sorrow labours in your breast, entrust it to me, it will perhaps relieve you.—Sister Agatha, attend, come near me. . . . nearer. . . . nearer still. . . . Nobody must overhear us. I will disclose to you all, but keep my secret. . . . You have seen her ?—Whom, Madam ? —It is not true that nobody has a sweetness like her ? How elegantly she walks ! what grace ! what nobleness ! what modesty ! . . . Go to her, tell her. . . . Alas ! no, don't go, say nothing to her. . . . You cannot approach her, the

angels of heaven guard her, they watch round her ; I have seen them, you will see them, and they will terrify you like me. Stop. . . . If you go, what can you say to her ? Devise something at which she will not blush. . . . But, Madam, were you to consult our Director. Yes, but, yes. . . . No, no, I know what he will tell me, I have already heard it all. . . . Of what am I to converse with him ? . . . O ! could I lose all memory ! . . . Could I sink into annihilation and be born again ! . . . Do not call the Director ; I would rather you read to me the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Read. . . . I begin to respire. . . . One drop of blood will suffice to purify me. . . . See, it springs bubbling from his side. . . . Apply that sacred wound to my head. . . . His blood streams over me, but does not remain. . . . I am undone ! . . . Take
away

away that crucifix. . . . Bring it back.... It was brought back to her; she pressed it between her hands, she kissed it all over, and added, These are her eyes, that is her mouth; when am I to see her again ?. . . Sister Agatha, tell her that I love her; paint to her faithfully my situation, tell her that I am dying.

She was bled, she was bathed; but remedies seemed only to increase her distemper. I durst not attempt to describe to you all the indecent actions she committed, all the obscene observations which escaped her during her delirium. Every moment she raised her hand to her brow to drive away tormenting ideas, images, I know not what images! She plunged her head into the bed, and covered her face with the sheets. It is the tempter! would she exclaim: What fantastic form has
he

he assumed ! Take some holy water ; throw some holy water over me... Stop, stop, he is now gone.

It was very soon found necessary to confine her ; but her prison was not so well guarded as to prevent her one day making her escape. She had torn her clothes to pieces ; all naked, she flew through the passages, except that two pieces of the broken cords, with which she had been bound, hung from her arms ; she cried, I am your Superior ; you have all taken the oath of obedience to me, and I shall be obeyed. Wretches ! you have thrown me into prison ; this then is the reward of my kindness ! you abuse me because I am too good ; I shall be so no more.... Fire !... murder !... thieves !... help !... Assist me, St. Theresa ; assist me, St. Susan.... Meanwhile, she was seized and taken back
to

to prison. She then said, You are right, you are right ; alas ! I have lost my reason, I feel that I have.

Sometimes she seemed haunted with the images of different punishments ; she thought she saw women with cords round their neck, and their hands tied behind their backs, some with torches in their hands. She imagined herself in company with those who were doing penance ; she thought herself on the way to the place of execution, and addressed the executioner : I have deserved my fate, but try and put me quickly out of pain.... I now tell you nothing, Sir, but what is exactly true ; and every circumstance does not occur to my recollection, or I should blush to pollute my pages with the recital.

After living several months in this deplorable situation, she died. What a frightful death, Marquis ! I saw her,

I saw her, the terrible picture of despair and guilt in her last moments. She thought herself surrounded by infernal spirits, that waited to catch her soul. She exclaimed, in a voice almost suffocated: There they are! see there!..... And opposing to them on the right and left, a crucifix which she held in her hand, she howled, she cried, My God!... My God!.... Sister Theresa very soon followed her; and we received another Superior advanced in years, full of ill-nature and superstition.

I was accused of having practised sorcery upon her predecessor; she believed the charge, and my vexations were renewed. The new Director was equally tormented by his Superiors, and persuaded me to elope from the house.

The plan of my flight was arranged. I repaired to the garden between eleven
and

and twelve at night. Ropes were thrown over the wall, which I fixed round me; they broke, and I fell to the ground. The skin of my legs was torn, and I received a violent contusion on the back. After a second and a third attempt, I reached the top of the wall. I descended; but how great was my surprise, when, instead of a post-chaise, in which I hoped to be received, I found a wretched public coach! I was now upon the road to Paris, with a young Benedictine. I very soon perceived, by the indecent tone which he assumed, and the liberties which he indulged, that none of the conditions which had been stipulated with me, would be observed. At this moment I regretted my cell, and felt all the horror of my situation.

Here I will paint the scene which took place in the coach. What a dreadful

ful scene! what a profligate man! I cried out; the coachman came to my assistance; a violent brawl ensued between the coachman and the monk.

I arrived at Paris. The carriage stopped in a little street, at a little narrow door, which opened into an obscure dirty alley. The mistress of the apartments came to meet me, and installed me in the highest story, in a little room, which contained hardly even necessary articles of furniture. I received a visit from the woman who occupied the first floor. You are young, Mademoiselle, you must needs grow melancholy for want of society. Come down stairs to my apartments; where you will find an agreeable company, both of gentlemen and ladies; all of them not indeed so handsome, but almost as young as yourself. We talk,
we

we play, we sing, we dance, we combine all kinds of amusements. Though you make all the gentlemen in love with you, I can assure you, that our ladies will neither be jealous nor offended. Come, Mademoiselle.... This woman was somewhat advanced in life, her voice was sweet, and her conversation extremely insinuating.

I passed a fortnight in this house, exposed to all the importunity of my perfidious ravisher, and to all the tumultuous scenes of a suspicious place, watching every moment an opportunity to escape.

One day, I at last found the means of putting my resolution in practice. Night was far advanced. Had I been in the neighbourhood of my convent, I should have returned to it. I ran, without knowing where I went. I was
stopped

stopped by some men ; terror seized me. Overpowered by fatigue, I sunk down in a swoon upon the threshold of a Tallow-chandler's shop. They administered assistance to me ; and when I recovered my senses, I found myself stretched upon a bed, surrounded by a number of people. They asked me who I was, and I know not what answer I returned. They gave me the servant girl of the house to conduct me ; I took her arm, and we walked on. We had already gone a considerable way, when the girl observed to me, Mademoiselle, you know surely where we are going ? —No, my child ; to the hospital, I believe.—To the hospital ! have you no house to go to ?—Alas ! no.—What have you done to be turned out of doors at this time of night ? but we are now at the gate of the hospital of St. Catherine ;

Catherine; let us try if we can procure admittance. At all events, be under no apprehension, you shall not remain in the streets, you shall share my bed.

I returned to the Tallow-chandler's. How great was the terror of the servant-girl when she saw the skin stripped off my legs, by the fall I received in making my escape from the convent! I passed the night in that house. The following evening I returned to the hospital of St. Catherine. There I remained three days; at the end of which, I received intimation, that I must either apply to the hospital general, or take the first situation that should offer.

What dangers did I encounter in the hospital of St. Catherine, both from men and women! for it is here, as I have since been informed, that the rakes

and women of the town go to provide themselves. The apprehension of misery gave no strength to the coarse attempts of seduction, to which I was exposed. I sold my clothes, and supplied myself with others more suitable to my situation.

I entered into the service of a laundress, with whom I at present reside. I receive linen which I iron. My day's work is severe. I am ill fed, ill lodged, and sleep on a wretched bed; but to make amends, I am treated with humanity. The husband is coachman in a family. The wife is a little hasty, but, in other respects, a good woman. I should be sufficiently content with my situation, could I hope to enjoy it unmolested.

I have been informed that the police laid hold of my ravisher, and sent him back to his Superiors. Poor wretch!
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he is more to be pitied than me. His attempt made a noise; and you cannot conceive with what cruelty faults attended with notoriety, are punished in religious houses. A dungeon will be his abode for the rest of his life, and this too is the fate which awaits me if I am retaken; but he will live longer in that situation than I should.

The pain of my fall is extremely severe, my legs are swelled, and I cannot walk a step. I work sitting, for I am unable to support myself standing. I yet dread the moment of my cure. What pretence shall I then have for not going out, and to what dangers must I expose myself by appearing in public? Happily, however, I have still some time before me. My relations, who can entertain no doubt of my being at Paris, are certainly employed in making every possible search. I had re-

solved, to send for M. Manouri to my garret, to ask and to follow his advice ; but he was no more.

It seems that my escape is public, and this is what I expected. One of my companions spoke of it to me yesterday, adding the most odious circumstances, and reflections the most afflicting. Fortunately, she was hanging up the wet linen on cords, with her back to the lamp, and did not perceive my agitation. My mistress, however, remarking that I wept, said, Mary, what is the matter with you ?—Nothing, replied I.—What then, added she, are you foolish enough to feel so much pity for a wicked nun, destitute of morals and religion, who fell in love with a rascal of a monk, with whom she eloped from her convent ? you must needs be of a very compassionate disposition indeed. She had nothing to do

do but eat, drink, say her prayers, and sleep. She was very well where she was; why did she not keep her situation? it she had only been ducked three or four times in the river in this weather, that would soon have reconciled her to her state.... To this I answered, That people knew little of any difficulties but their own; but this observation had better been spared, and she would not have added as she did, Fie! she is a slut whom God will punish.... At this remark I leant upon the table, and remained in that posture till my mistress said, But, Mary, what are you dreaming of then? while you sleep there, the work stands still.

I live in continual alarms. At the least noise I hear in the house, upon the stair-case, in the street, I am seized with terror, I tremble like a leaf, my knees refuse their support, and my work

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drops

drops from my hands. I pass almost all my nights without closing an eye; and if I sleep, my slumbers are broken. I speak, I call, I cry out; and I cannot conceive how the people with whom I live, have not yet divined the mystery.

I never had the spirit of the cloister, as my gait sufficiently shows; but in the convent I had accustomed myself to certain observances, which I repeat mechanically. For instance, if the clock strikes, I make the sign of the cross, or kneel down. If any one knock at the door, I say *Ave*. If any one ask me a question, I always return an answer which concludes with a Yes or No, dear mother, or, my sister. If a stranger come in, I fold my arms over my breast, and, instead of a curtesy, I bend forwards. My companions laugh, and think I amuse myself in counterfeiting

feiting the nun; but it is impossible that their mistake can continue; my thoughtlessness will betray me, and I shall be undone.

Hasten, Sir, to afford me relief. Doubtless you will say, tell me what it is in my power to do for you. My ambition is not great; it is this: I should wish for the situation of chamber-maid or housekeeper, or even common servant; provided I live unknown in the country, in some sequestered province, in the family of respectable people who see little company. The wages are no object of consideration. Security, repose, bread and water, are all I desire. Be assured that my employers will be perfectly satisfied with my service. In the house of my father I learnt to work, in the convent to obey. I am young, of a very gentle character. When my legs are cured, I

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shall

shall have more strength than will be sufficient for the employment. I can sew, spin, embroider, and wash ; when I lived in the world I used to make up my own lace, and I shall soon recover my former dexterity. I am not awkward at any thing, and there is nothing to which I cannot demean myself. I have some voice, I am acquainted with music, and I can play upon the harpsichord, in such a manner as to amuse any mother who has a taste for it; and I could even give some lessons to her children. But I should be afraid of being betrayed by these marks of a systematic education. If it was necessary to learn to dress hair, I possess taste, I could take a master, and soon acquire this little qualification... A tolerable situation, Sir, if possible, or indeed a place of any kind, is all that I desire,

I desire, and I wish for nothing more. You may answer for the purity of my morals in spite of appearances; I feel their influence, I feel also that of piety. Ah! Sir, all my calamities had been over, and I should have had nothing to fear from man, if God had not arrested my design. How often have I visited that deep well at the bottom of the garden belonging to the house! If I did not plunge myself into it, it was because I was not left perfectly at liberty. I know not what is the destiny reserved for me, but if I am compelled again to return to any convent whatever, I will not answer for myself; there are wells to be found every where. Have pity upon me, Sir, and do not, by neglecting my application, lay the foundation in your own breast, of long and bitter regret.

P. S.

P. S. I am overwhelmed with fatigue, I am surrounded with terror, and repose flies from me. These Memoirs, at first hastily written, I have submitted to a second perusal, when my mind was more collected; and I have discovered, that without the smallest intention, I have in truth, in every line, described myself as wretched as I really was, but much more amiable than I really am. Might the reason of this be, that we believe men to be less sensible to the picture of our sufferings, than to the image of our charms; and that we conceive it to be a more promising undertaking to seduce their passions, than to touch their feelings? I am very little acquainted with them, and I have not studied myself sufficiently to discover. Yet, if the Marquis, who is allowed to possess the most delicate feelings, should imagine that I address myself, not to his benevolence,

lence, but to his vice, what would he think of me? This reflection renders me uneasy. In truth, it were very wrong to impute to me personally a natural propensity common to my whole sex. I am a woman, perhaps a coquette for aught I know, but it is naturally, and without artifice.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT

FROM THE

LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE

OF M***.

1770.

THE Nun of M. De la Harpe has awaked my conscience, which has slept for ten years, by recalling to my recollection a horrible conspiracy of which I was the soul, carried on in concert with M. Diderot, and two or three other Gentlemen of this stamp, our intimate friends. It is not yet too late to make confession, and, in this holy time of Lent, to endeavour to obtain remission of his offence, along with my other sins, and drown all in the unfathomable well of divine mercy.

The

The year 1760 is distinguished in the calendars of the Parisian cockneys by the sudden and extraordinary reputation of *Ramponneau*, and the comedy of the *Philosophers*, performed in consequence of high authority, upon the the Theatre of the French Comedy. Of all this undertaking, there now remains only a recollection of the most profound contempt for Palissot, the author of this wonderful rhapsody, a feeling however which none of his protectors were disposed to share. Persons of the highest rank, while they favoured the attempt, thought themselves obliged in public to defend themselves from the imputation of such an understanding, as from a stain of dishonour. While all Paris was occupied with this piece of scandal, M. Diderot, whom the rogue of a French Aristophanes had chosen for his Socrates, was the only person

person to whom it gave no concern. But, what was our employment! Would to God it had been innocent! We had long been attached, by the bonds of the most tender friendship, to the Marquis de Croismare, formerly an officer in the King's regiment, retired from service, and one of the most amiable men in this country. He is nearly of the age of M. de Voltaire; and like that immortal character, he preserves a youthful vigour of mind, with a grace, a sprightliness, a combination of fascinating qualities, which for me possess a relish, the poignancy of which is never blunted. It may be said of him, that he is one of those amiable men, the cast and the model of which are only to be found in France, although amiable and repulsive qualities are alike common to every country upon earth. I do not here allude to the

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dispositions

dispositions of the heart, the elevation of sentiment, that strict and delicate probity which render M. de Croismare as respectable as he is dear to his friends. I speak only of the endowments of his mind. An imagination ardent and sprightly, an original turn of mind, opinions which only stop at a certain point, and which he alternately adopts or proscribes, a playfulness of humour, always regulated by propriety, an incredible activity of mind, which, combined with an idle life, and the multiplicity of the resources of Paris, hurries him to the most different and dissimilar employments, has created for him, wants which no man ever before imagined, and suggested means equally extraordinary for their gratification. This temper of consequence gives rise to an infinite succession of enjoyments. Such are a part of the elements which compose the being of
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of M. de Croismare, denominated by his friends, the charming Marquis by excellence, as they called the Abbé Galiani, the charming Abbé. M. Diderot, comparing his own simplicity of good-nature, with the acute turn of the Marquis de Croismare, sometimes told him, *Your wit is like the flame of spirit of wine, gentle and volatile, which spreads lambent over my fleece, but without ever burning it.*

This charming Marquis had left us at the beginning of the year 1759, to go to his estates in Normandy, near Caen. He had promised us to stay only the time necessary to put his affairs in order, but his absence was insensibly prolonged. He had collected all his children to that spot; he was very fond of his curate; he had abandoned himself to a passion for gardening; and as an imagination so lively as
his

his required some real or imaginary objects of attachment, he had all at once plunged into the most ardent devotion. In spite of this, he still loved us all very tenderly ; but probably we never should have seen him again at Paris, if he had not lost his two sons in succession. This event restored him to us at the end of about four years, after an absence of more than eight. His devotion, like every thing else, evaporated in the air of Paris, and he is at this moment more amiable than ever.

As we felt his loss very keenly, in 1760, after having supported it fifteen months, we deliberated on the means of inducing him to return to Paris. We recollected, that some time before his departure, much conversation, and a great deal of interest, had been excited in the world concerning a nun, who appealed judicially against her vows,

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into which she had been forced by her parents. This unfortunate recluse interested the Marquis to such a degree, that without having seen her, without knowing her name, without even previously ascertaining the truth of the facts, he went, and solicited in her favour all the counsellors of the great chamber of the Parliament of Paris. In spite of this generous intercession, the nun, by I know not what misfortune, lost her cause, and her vows were adjudged valid. In recalling the whole of this adventure to our minds, we resolved to revive it to our own advantage. We took it for granted, that this nun had been so fortunate as to escape from her convent; and, in consequence, we made her write to the Marquis de Croismare, to entreat assistance and protection. We did not despair of seeing him arrive in all haste to

to fly to the assistance of his nun ; or, even had he guessed our knavery at the first glance, we were preparing materials for mirth. This remarkable piece of waggery took quite a different turn, as you will see by the correspondence which I am about to submit to your perusal, between the pretended nun, and the honest and charming Marquis de Croismare, who never suspected for a moment the treachery of which we were guilty. It is this treachery which we have always had upon our consciences. We then employed ourselves at our suppers, amid loud bursts of laughter, in composing the letters which were to make our good Marquis weep ; and at these meetings we also read, with the same expressions of mirth, the virtuous answers which were returned by this generous and worthy friend. When we perceived, however, that the fortune

of our unfortunate heroine began to interest too deeply her tender benefactor, we adopted the expedient of taking her off by death, as you may remark; preferring the uneasiness which he would feel upon this event, to the certain danger of inflaming his imagination, by keeping her longer alive. After his return to Paris, we confessed to him the whole circumstances of this iniquitous conspiracy. He laughed, as you may conceive, at the trick; and the misfortunes of the poor nun served only to strengthen the bonds of friendship among those she left behind. One circumstance no less singular, is, that the imagination of our friend in Normandy was heated by this pleasantry; that of Diderot, on his part, was no less ardently inflamed. He began to write, in detail, the whole history of our nun. Had he completed his work, he would have wrought it up
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into one of the most just, the most interesting, and most pathetic romances that ever existed. It was impossible to read a single page of it, without being melted into tears : yet, as far as I recollect, it contained no mixture of love. It was a work of genius, which breathed the fervid imagination of its author. It was a performance too of public and general utility ; for it was the most severe satire upon cloisters ever composed. It was the more dangerous, because it only seemed to speak, of them with praise. The devotion of our young nun was angelic ; she ever preserved in her simple and tender heart, the most sincere reverence for every thing she had been taught to respect. But this romance never existed, except in detached shreds, and in that state has continued, as well as an infinite number of other works, of one of the finest geniuses

that France ever produced ; who would have rendered himself immortal by a number of masterly performances, had he ever possessed the disposition to be avaricious of his time, instead of resigning it to all the thoughtless people in Paris, whom I summon to appear at the last judgment, to answer before God and men, for the injury of which they were thus the authors.

The correspondence you are about to peruse, and our repentance, are all that remain of our poor unfortunate nun. You will please to remember, that all her letters, as well as of the lady by whom she was concealed, were fabricated by us sons of Beïial ; and that all those of her generous protector are genuine, and were written with pure sincerity.

Note

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Note of the Nun, to M. the Count de Croismare, Governor of the Royal Military Academy.

An unfortunate woman, in whom the Marquis de Croismare took an interest three years ago, when he lived near the Academy of Music, is informed that he now resides in the Military Academy. She sends to him upon the present occasion, to know if she still may reckon upon his kindness, as she is now more to be pitied than ever.

A few words in answer to this application, if convenient, would be considered as a favour. Her situation is urgent; and it is of importance that the bearer of this note should be ignorant of its purport.

Answer.

That the author of the note laboured under a mistake, and that the Marquis

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de Croismare alluded to, was at present at Caen.

This note was in the hand-writing of a young person whom we employed in the whole course of this correspondence. A porter carried it to the Military Academy, and brought back the verbal answer. This preliminary step was judged necessary, for several good reasons. The nun appeared, to confound the two cousins, and to be unacquainted with the orthography of their name. By this means, she very naturally learnt that her protector was at Caen. It was very probable, that the Governor of the Military Academy would avail himself of this opportunity to pass a jest on his cousin, and send him the note, which gave a great appearance of reality to our virtuous heroine. The Governor, a very amiable man,

man, like all who bear his name, was dissatisfied with the absence of his cousin, as well as ourselves; and we hoped to enlist him in the number of our accomplices. After his answer, the nun wrote to Caen.

*Letter of the Nun to M. the Marquis de
Croismare, at Caen.*

SIR,

I do not know to whom I write; but, in the distressing situation in which I am placed, it is you whom I address. If I have not been misinformed at the Military Academy, and if you are indeed the generous Marquis of whom I am in search, I will thank God. If you are not, I know not what I shall do. But I feel myself encouraged by the name you bear. I hope you will lend your assistance to an unfortunate person, whom you, Sir, or some other M. de Croismare,

mare, not he of the military academy, supported by your solicitations in an attempt she made three years ago, to obtain her enlargement from a perpetual prison, to which she had been condemned by the rigour of her parents. Despair has driven me to a second step, of which doubtless you will have heard; I have eloped from my convent. I was unable any longer to support my sufferings, and there only remained this method, or a still greater crime, to procure me that liberty, which I hoped from the justice of the laws.

If you were formerly my protector, Sir, let my present situation touch your heart, and awaken within you some feeling of compassion ! Perhaps you will think me indiscreet, in thus applying to a person unknown, in circumstances like mine. Alas ! Sir, did you know the desolate state to which I am reduced,

reduced, could you form any idea of the inhumanity with which faults that have excited public attention, are punished in religious houses, you would excuse me. But your soul is full of sensibility, and you would one day dread to recall to your memory an innocent creature, thrown for the remainder of her life into the dismal recesses of a dungeon. Relieve me, Sir, relieve me. The kind of service which I hope from you, and which it is easier for you to grant me in the country than in Paris, is this : To procure, me either in your own house, or among your acquaintances, at Caen, or elsewhere, the situation of chamber-maid, or house-keeper, or even common servant. Provided I am unknown, in the family of respectable people, who live retired, wages form no consideration. Let me have only bread and water, but at the same time, let

me

me be secure from pursuit. You may be assured that my employers will have no reason to be dissatisfied with my service. In the house of my parents, I learnt to work, in the convent to obey. I am young ; my disposition is gentle, and I am of a good constitution. When I recover my strength, it will be amply sufficient for every kind of domestic employment. I can embroider, sew, and wash. When I lived in the world, I used to make up my own lace, and I will soon recover the habit. I am not awkward, and I can apply to every thing. If it were necessary to learn to dress hair, I am not deficient in taste, and could soon acquire a knowledge of it. A tolerable situation, if possible, or a place, be what it may, is all I ask. You may answer for my morals, Sir. In spite of appearances, I am pious. There was a well at the bottom of the garden

garden of the convent I have quitted, a well upon which I have often gazed. All my ills had been ended, if God had not restrained me. Do not allow me, Sir, to be dragged back to this fatal house ! Do me this service, which I implore. It is a good work, which you will remember with satisfaction as long as you live, and which God will reward in this world, or in the next. Above all, Sir, consider that I live in continual alarm, and that I count the moments as they pass. My relations cannot entertain a doubt of my being at Paris ; they doubtless make every kind of enquiry to discover me ; do not allow them time to succeed in their search. I brought away with me all my clothes. I subsist by my labour, and by the assistance I receive from a worthy woman, who was formerly my friend, and to whom you may direct
your

your answer. Her name is Madam Madin. She lives at Versailles. This good woman will furnish me with whatever is necessary for my journey ; and after I have obtained a place, I shall need nothing, and no longer be a burden upon her kindness. My conduct, Sir, will justify the protection which you may be pleased to grant me. Whatever may be the answer you give to my application, in the worst event, I shall only lament the severity of my fortune.

The following is Madam Madin's address. *Madam Madin, at the Pavillion de Bourgogne, Anjou Street, Versailles.*

You will have the goodness to send two covers ; her address upon the one, and a cross upon the other.

My God, with what anxiety do I wait your answer ! I am in continual agony.

agony. Your very humble and most obedient servant,

(Signed) SUSAN DE LA MARRE.

We required an address to receive his answers, and we chose Madam Madin, the wife of an officer who had served in the infantry, and who actually lived at Versailles. She knew nothing of our trick, nor of the letters which she made him write to herself in the sequel, and for which we employed the hand-writing of another young person. Madam Madin only knew that it was necessary to receive, and convey to me all the letters with the post-mark of Caen. As chance would have it, M. de Croismare, after his return to Paris, and about eight years after our sin had been committed, met with Madam Madin one morning at the house of a lady of our acquaintance, who had
4 been

been in the plot. It was a real theatrical scene. M. de Croismare expected to receive an infinite deal of information, with regard to the unfortunate person who had excited such lively interest in his mind, and of whom Madam Madin knew not a single word. This, accordingly, was the moment of our general confession, and of our pardon.

Answer of the Marquis de Croismare.

MADemoiselle,

Your letter reached the very person you were in quest of. You have not been mistaken with regard to his sentiments. You may leave town immediately for Caen, to be the waiting-maid of a young lady.

The lady, your friend, may write to me, that she sends a waiting-maid, such as I desire, with such recommendation

dation of your qualifications as she thinks proper, without going into any particulars of your situation. She may fix also the name which you are to adopt, the conveyance you have taken, and, if possible, the day upon which you will arrive. If you take the coach for Caen, it sets out from Paris, early on Monday morning, and reaches this place upon Friday. It departs from Paris, in Saint Dennis Street, from the Great Stag. If there is no person to receive you upon your arrival at Caen, you will apply, in my name, at the house of M. Gassion, opposite the *Place Royal*, till you hear from me. As it is indispensably necessary on both sides that you should remain unknown, it is proper that the lady, your friend, should send me back this letter, on which, though without signature, you may most perfectly rely. Retain only the

seal, which will serve you as an introduction to the person to whom you apply.

Observe, Mademoiselle, exactly and diligently, what this letter prescribes. To act with prudence, you should encumber yourself neither with letters nor papers, nor any thing else, which could produce a discovery. It will be easy to send them on a future occasion. Rely, with the most perfect confidence, on the good intentions of your servant.

At, near Caen, Thursday, 6th February, 1760.

This letter was addressed to Madam Madin. There was upon the cover of the inclosed a cross, according to agreement. The seal represented a Cupid, holding in the one hand a flambeau, and in the other two hearts, with a device which was illegible, because the
seal

seal had been injured in opening the letter. It was natural for the nun, who was unacquainted with love, to take it for her guardian angel.

Answer of the Nun to M. the Marquis de Croismare.

SIR,

I received your letter. I believe I have been ill, very ill. I am very weak. If it please God to take me to himself, I shall offer up incessant prayers for your safety. If I recover, I shall do every thing you command me. My dear Sir! generous man! I shall never forget your goodness.

My generous friend is expected from Versailles; she will communicate every thing to you.

Sunday, February.

O 2

I will

I will preserve the seal with care. It is a holy angel which the impression represents ; it is you, it is my guardian angel !

M. Diderot being unable to attend the meeting of the club, this answer was sent without his concurrence. He did not approve of it, and alledged, that it would discover our conspiracy. He was mistaken, and I think he was wrong in disapproving of this answer. To satisfy him, however, we inserted in the minutes of the common council of the imposture, the following answer, which was *not* sent. Besides too, this illness was indispensably necessary to postpone her departure for Caen.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT from the MINUTES.

The foregoing is the letter which was sent, and the following is that which Sister Susan ought to have written.

SIR,

I return you thanks for your goodness. I must no longer think of anything; all will soon be over with me. Shortly I shall be in the presence of the God of mercy; there I shall remember you. The physicians consult whether they shall bleed me once more. They may do as they please. Adieu, my dear Sir; I hope the abode to which I am going, will be happier than this; one day we shall meet there.

*Letter of Madam Madin to M. the
Marquis Croismare.*

I am by her bed side, and she urges me to write to you. She has been in

the last extremities, and my situation, which confines me to Versailles, has prevented me from coming sooner to her assistance. I knew that she was very ill, and totally desolate in the world; and yet I could not leave my charge. You may easily conceive, Sir, that she has suffered a great deal. She had received a fall, which she concealed. She was suddenly attacked with a violent fever, the progress of which it was impossible to check, but by frequent bleedings. I believe she is now out of danger. At present I am chiefly apprehensive lest her recovery be tedious, and that she will not be able to set out for a month or six weeks; she is already so weak, and she must still be farther reduced. Endeavour then, Sir, to obtain some delay, and let us jointly exert ourselves to save the most unfortunate and the most interesting creature in the world.

world. I am unable to describe the effect which your note produced upon her. She wept much ; she wrote the address of M. Gassion in her pocket-book ; and then she would write to you in spite of her weakness. She had then just recovered from a crisis of the fever ; I know not what she has said to you, for her poor head was then not quite in order. Excuse me, Sir, I write this in haste. I pity her extremely, but it is impossible for me to remain here many days together. You will receive the letter you wrote her. I send one nearly such as you require. I do not mention in it her ornamental accomplishments. They are not consistent with the situation into which she is about to enter ; and, in my opinion, she must renounce them entirely, if she wishes to remain unknown. In short, Sir, all that I have said of her is true. There is not a mother

who would not be overjoyed to have such a child. My first care, as you may suppose, was to place her in security ; and that point is attained. I cannot resolve to let her go till her health is perfectly re-established, and that cannot take place in less than a month or six weeks, as I have already had the honour to mention. To admit of this too, no accident must intervene. She preserves the seal of your letter ; it is kept in her prayer book, and under her pillow. I have never ventured to tell her that it was not yours. I broke it as I opened your answer, and replaced it with mine. In the disagreeable situation in which she was placed, I could not hazard communicating your letter to her without having read it. I venture to request from you a few lines to sustain her hopes. They are the only hopes she has left ; and if they were to

be cut off, I would not answer for her life. If you would have the goodness to acquaint me with a few particulars of the house where she is to go, I should avail myself of them to tranquillise her mind. Be under no apprehension about your letters, they shall all be sent back, as exactly as the first; and depend upon the personal interest I have in doing nothing inconsiderate. We shall conform to all your directions, unless you change your plan. Adieu, Sir. The dear unfortunate prays to God for you every moment her head permits.

I expect your answer, Sir, as before, at the Pavilion de Bourgogne, Anjou-street, Versailles.

16th February, 1760.

Ostensible

*Ostensible Letter of M. Madin, such as the
Marquis Croismare had required.*

SIR,

The person whom I propose to send you, is called Susan Saulier. I love her as if she were my own child ; you may, however, rely upon what I am about to tell you as literally true, because it is not my character to exaggerate. She has lost both father and mother. She is well born, and her education has not been neglected. She is acquainted with all the little kinds of work which are learnt by those who are clever, and who choose to be attentive. She speaks little, but very well, and writes naturally. If the person, for whose service she is intended, wished to make her read to her, she reads admirably. She is of midling stature. Her shape is very good. As to her countenance,

countenance, I have seldom seen one more interesting. She may, perhaps, be thought too young, for I do not think she is quite twenty-two years of age; but if she is deficient in the experience of age, it is supplied by that of misfortune. She has a great deal of discretion, and an uncommon share of judgement. I can answer for the innocence of her morals. She is pious, but not bigotted. She possesses a fund of easy natural wit, a mild gaiety of temper, and never is ill-natured. I have two daughters; and, if particular circumstances did not prevent Mademoiselle Saulier from settling at Paris, I should seek no other governess for them, nor could I expect to find one so well qualified for the situation. I have known her from her infancy, and have never lost sight of her. She will

will leave this place amply supplied with clothes. I will undertake the little expences of her journey, and also those of her return, if she should happen to be sent back to me. This is the least I can do for her. She has never been out of Paris ; she knows not where she is going ; she thinks herself lost ; and I have the utmost difficulty in supporting her spirits. A few lines from you, Sir, giving some account of the person she is to serve, the house in which she is to live, and the business she will have to perform, will have more effect upon her mind than all I can say. I hope, in asking this favour, I do not trespass too much upon your goodness. Her whole fear is that she will not give satisfaction. The poor child is but little acquainted with her own qualifications.

I have

I have the honour to be, with all the
sentiments which you deserve,

Sir,

Your very humble

and most obedient servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, 16th February, 1760.

*Letter of the Marquis Croismare to
Madam Madin.*

MADAM,

Two days ago I received a few lines,
acquainting me with the indisposition of
Mademoiselle ***. Her misfortunes
inspire me with the most poignant
sorrow, the state of her health distresses
me extremely. May I ask of you the
consolation of being informed of her
situation; the line of conduct she in-
tends to pursue, in a word, an answer
to the letter I wrote her? From your
politeness, and the interest you take in
her

her concerns, I presume to hope that you will not refuse me that satisfaction.

Your most humble
and obedient servant.

Caen, 17th February, 1760.

*Another Letter from the Marquis Croismare
to Madam Madin.*

I was extremely impatient to hear from you, Madam; and, happily, your letter has suspended my uneasiness with regard to the situation of Mademoiselle ***, whom you assure me is now out of danger, and safe from all enquiries. I wrote to her, and you may give still farther assurances of the continuance of my sentiments. Her letter struck me; and, in the critical situation in which I saw she was placed, I thought I could not do better than settle her in my own family, in placing her with my daughter, who

who, unfortunately, has lost her mother. This, then, Madam, is the family in which I intended to provide for her. I can depend upon myself, and upon my attention to soothe her sufferings, without allowing the secret to escape, which, perhaps, would be more difficult in other hands. I cannot but lament both her situation, and that my fortune does not permit me to do her all the service I desire. But what can we do when we are controuled by the law of necessity? I live two leagues from the town, in a very pleasant country house, where I pass the time, very retired, with my daughter and my eldest son, who is a youth of feeling, and of religion; to whom, however, I shall communicate nothing which regards her situation. As to the domestics, they are all people who have been long in my service,

so that my situation is very calm and tranquil. I must farther add, that the alternative I now propose is only to be considered as a resource in case nothing else shall offer. If any thing better should occur, I do not mean to constrain her by any engagement. But she may depend upon it, that she shall ever find in me a certain resource. Thus she may endeavour to re-establish her health without uneasiness. I shall wait till that is accomplished, and in the mean time I shall be extremely happy to hear of her frequently.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your very humble

and most obedient servant.

Caen, February 21st, 1760.

Letter

Letter of the Marquis of Croismare to Sister Susan. (Upon the cover was a Cross.)

Nobody, Mademoiselle, is more sensibly affected than I am, by the situation in which you are placed. I am the more and more impelled to exert myself, in order to procure you some consolation amidst the misfortunes by which you are pursued. Resume the tranquillity of your mind, and endeavour to recover your strength, and rely with the most perfect confidence upon my sentiments. Your only object of attention should be to re-establish your health, and to remain unknown. Were it in my power to alleviate your misfortunes, I would do it with pleasure. But your situation constrains me, and I can only lament the hard law of necessity. The person for whom I intend you, is one whom I hold most dear; and you will be chiefly

under my own superintendance. Thus, as much as possible, it shall be my care to soften the little hardships, inseparable from the station you are to occupy. You will give me all your confidence, and I will repose entirely upon your attention. This assurance ought to calm your mind, and prove my sentiments; and the sincere attachment with which I am, Mademoiselle, your very humble and most obedient servant.

Caen, 21 Feb. 1760.

I wrote to Madam Madin, who can give you farther information.

*Letter from Madam Madin to the
Marquis de Croismare.*

SIR,

The recovery of our dear invalid is now assured: the fever, and the disorder in her head, are quite gone; there

there is every symptom of a speedy and complete convalescence. Her lips are still a little pale, but her eyes resume their wonted lustre. The colour begins to return into her cheeks ; her flesh has regained its fresh appearance. and will not be long in acquiring firmness ; every thing goes well since the tranquillity of her mind was restored. It is now, Sir, that she feels the value of your kindness ; and nothing can be more affecting, than the way in which she expresses her sense of it. I should wish to be able to describe to you what passed between us, when I delivered to her your last letters. She took them, her hands trembled ; she breathed with difficulty as she read them ; she stopped at the end of every line, and throwing herself upon my neck, while she shed a flood of tears, she said to me, *Well, Mama Madin, then God has not forsaken me, he still in-*

tends that I shall be happy. It is God who inspired me with the idea of applying to this dear Gentleman: who in the world, except himself, would have taken pity upon me? Let us thank Heaven for its first favours, in hopes that it will still confer more. She then sat down upon her bed, and began to pray; and afterwards returning upon some passages in your letter, she said, It is his daughter that he entrusts to me! Ah! mama, she will resemble him; she will be gentle, munificent, and charitable, like him. After pausing a little, she proceeded with some emotion: She has no mother! I regret that I do not possess all the experience which would be necessary for taking such a charge. I know nothing, but I will do my best; I will recall, night and morning, what I owe to her father: gratitude will supply many defects. Will it be long before I get well?

When

When will they permit me to eat? I don't feel any of the effects of my fall; none at all. I go through this short detail, Sir, because I hope that it will please you. She displayed, in her conversation and manner, so much innocence and warmth, that I was almost beside myself. I know not what I would have given, that you could have seen and heard her. Yes, Sir, either I am blind, or you will have in her, a girl of ten thousand; one who will prove a blessing to your family. What you have had the goodness to inform me of yourself, Mademoiselle your daughter; of little master, your son; and of your situation; corresponds entirely with her wishes. She persists in the first propositions she made to you. She asks only food and cloathing; and if it is agreeable to you, you may take her at her word: though

I am not rich, the rest will be my concern. I love this child, I have adopted her in my heart ; and the trifle which I have hitherto spared her out of my income, shall be continued after my death. I will not conceal from you that the words, *her last resource, and leaving her at liberty to accept of a better situation, if an opportunity offers*, made her uneasy ; I was not sorry at finding her possessed of this measure of delicacy. I shall not fail to inform you of her progress in convalescence ; but I have a grand scheme in agitation, and I do not despair of its succeeding, after her health is re-established, if you recommend me to one of your friends ; you must have a great many here. He must be a prudent, intelligent, clever man, not of too much consideration, who has access, either through himself or friends, to some great people, whom
I shall

I shall name, and who can have admission to Court, without belonging to it. From the way in which the plan is arranged in my mind, it will not be necessary that he be made a confident; he may serve us without knowing how; and even though my attempt should turn out to be fruitless, we shall derive the advantage from it, of making it believed that she is in a foreign country. If you can recommend me to some person, I beg that you will mention his name, and where he lives; you can afterwards write to him, that Madam Madin, whom you have known for a long time, will wait upon him to ask him to do her a service; and request him to take an interest in the business, if it is practicable. I have only to add, that you may depend upon the interest that I take in our unfortunate girl, and upon some prudence, for which I am indebted

to experience. The joy which your last letter occasioned her, has a little raised her pulse ; but it will be nothing.

I have the honour to be, with sentiments of the highest respect,

SIR,

Your very humble

and obedient servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, 3d March, 1760.

The idea of Madam Madin applying for a recommendation to one of the friends of the generous protector of Sister Susan, was a suggestion of the Devil, by means of which his agents hoped to bring their friend insensibly from Normandy, to apply personally to me, and to make me a confidant of the whole affair : the scheme perfectly succeeded, as will be seen from the rest of the correspondence,

Letter

*Letter from Sister Susan, to M. the
Marquis de Croismare.*

SIR,

Madam Madin has delivered to me the two answers with which you have honoured me, and likewise has read to me part of the letter that you have written to her. I accept your offer. It is a hundred times better than I deserve; yes, a hundred, a thousand times better. I know little of the world; I have so little experience; and I am sensible of the vast deal it would require to render me worthy of your confidence; but I hope for your indulgence, in consideration of my zeal, and of my gratitude. My place will make me; and Mama Madin says, that that is better, than if I were made for my place. My God! how impatient I am for my recovery, that I may go and throw myself at my benefactor's feet, and serve him, by
being

THE NUN.

being of all the use I can to his dear girl! They tell me that it will be a month before I get well. A month! That is a long time. My dear Sir, preserve your kindness for me. I am transported with joy; but they do not wish that I should write; they will not permit me to read; they keep me in bed; they'll give me nothing but barley water; they famish me; and all for my good. God be praised! it is not, however, with my inclination that I obey.

I am, with a grateful heart,

SIR,

Your most obedient,

and very humble servant,

(Signed) SUSAN SAULIER.

Paris, March 3d, 1760,

Letter

Letter from M. the Marquis de Croismare to Madam Madin.

Some ailments, to which I have been subjected for a few days, have prevented me, Madam, from answering you sooner, and expressing the pleasure I felt at being informed of the convalescence of Mademoiselle Saulier. I hope it will soon be in your power to inform me of the perfect re-establishment of her health, tidings to which I look forward with anxiety. But I am mortified at not having it in my power to contribute to the execution of a scheme in her favour, that you have in contemplation, and which, without knowing what it is, I am sure is an excellent one, from the prudent management of which you are capable, and the interest you take in her welfare. I am very little known at Paris, and only among a few, as little known as myself ; acquaintances, such
as

as you desire, are not easily to be found. Continue, I beseech you to send me accounts of Mademoiselle Saulier, whose interests shall always be most dear to me.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient humble servant.

March 13, 1760.

*Answer of Madam Madin to M. the
Marquis of Croismare.*

SIR,

I was to blame; perhaps, in not explaining myself upon the project which I have conceived, but I was exceedingly pressed in point of time. The following is the outline of what struck me. In the first place, you must know, that the Cardinal de Fleury protected the family. By his death, they all lost a very valuable friend,

friend; particularly my Susan, who had been presented to him in her infancy: The old Cardinal being fond of beautiful children; Susan's grace did not fail to strike him, and accordingly he took the charge of her fortune. But when he died, they disposed of her in the way of which you have been informed; and her protectors thought that they discharged their duty to the youngest, by marrying her eldest sisters to two creatures of their own; one of whom has an office of some consideration at Alby, the other the receipt of the customs at Castres, three leagues from Montpelier. They are of as a merciless disposition, but they hold their situations at the good will of those by whom they were placed in them. I have thought then, that if one had some mode of access to Madam the Marchioness of Castries, whose name is Fleury, and who

who took an active part in my child's process, and if the melancholy situation of a young person, exposed to all the consequences of misery in a foreign and distant country, was represented to her, that this lady, who has a great character for compassion, might interest herself with her husband, or with the Duke of Fleury, her brother, and that we might be able, through their interference, to procure her a small annuity from her two brothers-in-law, who have got all the property of the family, and who have no intention of giving any share of it to poor Susan. I really think, Sir, the plan is worthy the serious consideration of us both. With this small pension, together with what I have settled upon her, and what she may receive from your goodness, she would be very well for the present, and tolerably provided for the future; so that I could part with her with
the

less regret. But, I know neither M. the Marquis de Castries, nor his lady, nor any person connected with them; and it was the child who suggested to me the idea of applying to you. I have only to add, that her convalescence does not advance so rapidly as I could wish. She was hurt about the reins, as I believe I have told you: the pain of her fall, which was gone for some time, has returned; it comes and goes. It is accompanied with a slight shivering, but her pulse does not indicate the smallest symptoms of fever. The physician shakes his head, and has not an air which pleases me. She is going to mass next Sunday; she wishes it, and I have sent her a large cloak, which will completely cover her; under which I think she may pass half an hour without danger in a small church. She sighs for the moment of her departure; and

I am

I am sure she prays for nothing with greater fervour, than the completion of her cure; and a continuance of the kindness of her benefactor. If she is able to travel between Easter and Low Sunday, I shall not fail to let you know. Her absence would not obstruct my endeavours to discover, among my acquaintances, some one who may have interest with Madam de Castries, or her husband.

I am, Sir, with infinite respect,

Your most obedient

and very humble servant,

(Signed) — MOREAU MADIN.

Versailles, March 25, 1760.

P. S. I have forbidden her to write to you, for fear of importuning you; no other consideration would have prevented her.

Letter.

*Letter from M. the Marquis de Croismare
to Madam Madin.*

MADAM,

Your scheme in favour of Mademoiselle Saulier appears to be very commendable; and it pleases me the more, because I eagerly wish to see her, in her misfortune, placed in a situation a little passable. I do not despair of finding some friend to interest himself with Madam de Castries; but it will require time and some precautions, as well for the purpose of avoiding a disclosure of the secret, as to ascertain the prudence of the person to whom I apply. Be assured I shall not lose sight of it; in the mean time, if Mademoiselle Saulier perseveres in the same sentiments, and if her health is sufficiently re-established, let nothing prevent her from setting out; she will find my dispositions towards her always the same.

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Q

with

with those which I have already manifested, and my zeal to sweeten if possible the bitterness of her lot unabated. The situation of my affairs, and the misfortunes of the times, have obliged me to retire to the country, for the sake of economy, so that we live in the greatest simplicity. Mademoiselle Saulier, therefore, need put herself to very little expence in dress, as common things will do for the country. It is in this rusticated simple state that she will find us, and where I hope, notwithstanding the frugality I am obliged to observe, she will experience some pleasure and comfort. You will have the goodness, Madam, to inform me of her departure; and in case she has mislaid my address, it is, M. Gassion, opposite the *Place Royale, at Caen*. If, however, I am informed of the time of day at which she will arrive, she will find

find some person to conduct her here without stopping.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your very humble

and most obedient servant.

March 31, 1760.

*Letter of Madam Madin, to M. the
Marquis de Croismare.*

If she persevere in the same sentiments, Sir! How can you entertain a doubt of it? What can she do better than to go and pass her days in happiness and tranquillity with a man of worth, and in the society of a genteel family? Is she not too happy in being the object of your regard? and where would she lay her head, were she to be secluded from the asylum which you have had the generosity to offer her? These are her own words, Sir, which I

Q 2

am

am only repeating. She was obstinate in wishing to go to mass on Easter Sunday ; it was contrary to my advice, which she has suffered from not taking. She returned from church with a considerable fever upon her, and ever since that fatal day she has been worse. Sir, I cannot permit her to set off till her health is perfectly restored. There is now a good deal of heat about her reins, at the place where she was hurt by the fall ; I have been inspecting it, but I can perceive nothing. Her physician told me the day before yesterday, as we went down stairs together, that he was afraid that a suppuration was beginning ; but that he must wait to see how it would turn out. She does not want appetite however ; she sleeps, and does not fall much away. I now and then observe a little more colour in her cheeks, and a little more
vivacity.

vivacity in her eyes than is natural to them; and then her impatience distresses me. She rises, she tries to walk; but whenever she leans a little to the weak side, there is a cry which is enough to pierce one's heart. I have hopes of her, notwithstanding; and I shall employ the mean time in arranging her little wardrobe.—It consists of

A robe of English callimanco, which she can wear singly while the warm weather lasts, and which she may line for the winter with another of blue cotton which she now wears.

Five shifts with furnitures, some of cambric, and the rest of muslin. About the middle of June I shall send her a piece of linen which is now bleaching at Penlis, to make six more.

Some white petticoats, of which two are dimity flounced with muslin.

Two wrappers of the same pattern,

Q 3

which

which I had made for my youngest daughter, and which fit her exactly. They will serve for dressing gowns.

Some corsets, aprons, and neck-handkerchiefs.

Two dozen of pocket-handkerchiefs.
Some night-caps.

Six night-gowns, with eight pairs of single and three pairs of double ruffles.

Six pairs of fine cotton stockings.

This is all with which I have been able to provide her. I carried them to her this morning, and I cannot tell you with what sensibility she received them. She inspected one thing, she tried on another, she grasped my hands and kissed them: she could not refrain from crying when she saw my daughter's wrappers. What makes you cry? I said to her. Have you not always stood in that relation to me? *True*, replied she, and then added, *Now that I hope to be happy,*

happy, I think I should be unwilling to die. Mama, how is it that this heat in my side will not go away? I wish they would put something to it. I am delighted, Sir, that you do not disapprove of my plan, and that you see a probability of its succeeding. I leave everything to your prudence; but I think it my duty to warn you that the Marquis de Castries is going to serve in the campaign: that as soon as he sets out, Madam de Castries will go to her estate; and that in seven or eight months we shall be quite forgotten here. Every thing soon loses its interest in this country; we are less spoken of already than we were; and in a short time we shall not be spoken of at all. Don't be afraid that she has mislaid the address you sent her; she never opens her prayer-book without looking at it; she will sooner forget

the name of Saulier than that of M. Gassion. I asked her if she did not wish to write to you: she replied, that she had begun a long letter, which she meant should contain every thing which she could least dispense with communicating to you, if God in his mercy was pleased to recover her, and bring you together; but that she had a pre-sentiment that she should never see you. *This complaint; added she, is of too long duration; I shall neither profit from your goodness nor from his; either the Marquis will change his mind, or I shall not recover.* What folly, said I! Do you know that if you entertain these gloomy ideas, what you are afraid of will come to pass? She said, *The will of the Lord be done!* I requested her to shew me what she had written: it frightened me; it was a volume. There, said I to her, somewhat angry, is what kills you.

She

She answered, *What would you have me do? I am either afflicted with pain or with ennui. And when have you been able to scribble all this? A little at one time, and a little at another. Whether I live or die, I wish him to know what I have suffered.*—I have forbidden her to continue it. Her physician has backed my prohibition. I pray you, Sir, to join your authority to my entreaties; she will consider you as her master, and will obey you as such. As I conceived, however, the time to hang heavy upon her, and that it was necessary that she should be employed, was it only to prevent her from persisting in writing, musing, and fretting; I proposed that she should tambour a vest for you. The idea pleased her exceedingly, and she has begun the work. God grant that she may have time to finish

it here ! One word, if you please, forbidding her to write or to work too much. I had resolved to return to night to Versailles, but I am uneasy ; the supuration frightens me, and I wish to be with her to-morrow, when her physician returns. I have unfortunately some faith in the presentiments of the sick ; they are sensible of their own situation. When I lost M. Madin, all the physicians assured me that he would recover ; he said himself he never should recover, and the poor man spoke what was but too true. I shall remain with her, and shall have the honour to write you ; if I lose her, I think I shall never get the better of it. You will be happy, Sir, in never having seen her. Now the wretches who determined her to make her escape, are sensible of their loss, but it is too late.

I have

I have the honour to be with sentiments of respect and gratitude, both on her account and my own.

Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, April 13, 1760.

*Answer of M. the Marquis de Croismare
to Madam Madin.*

I share, Madam, with real sensibility, your uneasiness respecting the illness of Mademoiselle Saulier. Her unfortunate situation always gave me infinite concern; but the details which you have had the goodness to send me, prejudice me so much in her favour, that I cannot help feeling a most lively interest in every thing which relates to her: so far am I from having changed my sentiments upon this subject, that I beseech

beseech you to take the trouble of repeating to her those which I expressed in my letters, and which will never undergo any alteration. I have thought it prudent not to write to her, that she may have no occasion for making any reply. Every kind of exertion must, no doubt, be prejudicial in her present infirm state; and, if I had any power over her, I would employ it in restricting her. There is no person fitter than you, Madam, to acquaint her with my opinion upon this head. Not that I am not charmed at receiving accounts from herself; but I cannot approve in her an action of pure complaisance, which may contribute to retard her recovery. The interest which you, Madam, feel in her welfare, renders it unnecessary for me to request of you to moderate her exertions. You may believe me to be with
the

the most sincere affection for her, and
with particular esteem and high respect
for your character,

Madam,
Your very humble
and obedient Servant.

April 25, 1760.

P. S. I have this moment written to
one of my friends, by whom you can
have access to Madam de Castries.
He is a Mr. Grimm, Secretary to the
Duke of Orleans; he lives in the *Rue*
Neuve, Luxembourg, near the *Rue*
Saint Honoré, at Paris. I informed
him that you would take the trouble to
call at his house, represented to him
the great obligation under which I lie
to you, and expressed a strong desire
of manifesting my gratitude. He usu-
ally dines from home,

*Letter of Madam Madin to M. the
Marquis de Croismare.*

Oh ! Sir, what I have suffered since I had the honour of writing to you ! I cannot think of making you a partner of my pain ; and I hope you will take it kind that I have not subjected your susceptible heart to a trial so severe. You know how dear she is to me. Conceive then, Sir, what I must have felt at seeing her near five hours concluding her life in the most acute pain. At length I think God has taken pity upon her and upon me. The poor unfortunate still lives, but it cannot be long. Her strength is exhausted ; she can hardly speak or open her eyes. Patience is all that is left her. Were she to lose that, what would become of us ? The hopes which I entertained of her recovery were extinguished all of a sudden. There is an abscess
formed

formed in her side, which has been making a secret progress ever since her fall. She would not suffer it to be opened in time; and when she could have resolved upon it, it was too late. She perceives her last moment approaching; she insists upon my leaving her; and I confess to you I am not able to witness the spectacle. The sacrament was administered to her last night between ten and eleven. It was done at her own desire. After this melancholy ceremony, I remained alone by her bed-side. She heard me sigh; she sought my hand; I gave it her; she took it, raised it to her lips, and pulling me to her, she said in a tone of voice so low that I could scarcely hear her, *Mama, one favour more. What, my child? Give me your blessing, and go away.* She added, *M. the Marquis do not fail to thank him.* These words

words will be her last. I have left orders, and retired to a friend's house, where I am waiting in momentary expectation. It is one o'clock in the morning. Perhaps we have now a friend in Heaven.

I am with respect, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

Signed MOREAU-MADIN.

This succeeding letter was due the 7th of May; but it was not dated.

Letter of Madam Madin to M. the Marquis de Croismare.

The dear child is no more; her pains are at end; and ours have still perhaps a long time to last. She departed from this world to that whither we must all follow her, on Wednesday last, between three and four of the morning. As her life had been innocent, so her last moments

ments were tranquil, notwithstanding all that happened to disturb them. Permit me to thank you for the tender interest you took in her fortune, it is the only duty which I have now to perform to her. Enclosed are all the letters with which you have honoured us. I have kept some of them myself, and I have found the rest among some papers which he delivered to me a few days before she died, and which she told me contained the history of her life, at her parents, and in the three convents in which she lived, and of what had passed since her escape. It is not probable that I shall read them soon; I cannot see any thing which belonged to her, nor any thing even which my friendship had destined for her, without awakening the most pungent sorrow.

If ever I can be so happy, Sir, as to

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be

be useful to you in any way, I shall be much flattered by your remembrance of me. I am, with those sentiments of respect and gratitude which are due to kindness and compassion,

SIR,

Your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

May 10, 1760.

*Letter of M. the Marquis de Croismare
to Madam Madin.*

I know, Madam, what it costs a tender and benevolent heart to lose the object of its attachment, and the happy opportunity of dispensing favours, the rightful claim of misfortune and amiable qualities, such as those possessed by the dear young lady who is now the cause of our regrets. I share your sorrow, Madam, with the most tender sensibility. You knew her, and this
renders

renders your separation the more cruel. Without having had that good fortune, her misfortunes touched me with the most lively sympathy, and I tasted in anticipation, the pleasure of being able to contribute to the tranquillity of her days. If Heaven has ordered it otherwise, and deprived me of that satisfaction so much desired, I bow to its desires, but I cannot be insensible to the loss I have sustained. You have at least the consolation to have acted from motives the most noble, in a manner the most generous. I have admired your conduct, and my ambition has been to imitate it. I have only to express the ardent wish I feel to be honoured with your acquaintance, and of having an opportunity of telling you in person, how much I have been enchanted with your greatness of soul,

R 2

and

and with what respectful considération
I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most humble

and very obedient servant.

May 18, 1760.

Whatever respects the memory of our
unfortunate, is become extremely pre-
cious. Will it not be too great a sacri-
fice to ask of you to transmit to me,
the short memoirs which she has written
of her various misfortunes? I request
this favour of you, Madam, with the
greater confidence, that you have told
me I have some right to them. I shall
be punctual in returning them, as well
as all your letters, if you think proper,
by the first opportunity. You will have
the goodness to send them by the driver
of the Caen waggon, who lodges at the
Grand Cerf, Rue St. Denis, Paris, and
who sets out every Monday.

THUS

THUS ends the history of the unfortunate Susan de la Marre, called Saulier. It is a great pity that the memoirs of her life had not been extended into a regular history : they would have formed a very interesting narrative. After all, M. the Marquis de Croismare is much obliged to the perfidy of his friends, for having furnished him with an opportunity of succouring misfortune, with a nobleness, an interest, and a simplicity, truly worthy of him ; the part which he acts in this correspondence, is not the least affecting of the romance.

We may, perhaps, be blamed for hastening the death of Sister Susau with very little humanity ; but it became necessary, from information we had received from the castle of Lasson, that they were fitting up an apartment for the reception of Mademoiselle de Croismare ; and that her father intended to take her out of the convent where she
had

had lived since her mother's death. Our information further stated, that they expected a woman from Paris, to act, in the mean time, as governess for the young lady ; and that M. de Croismare was endeavouring otherwise to provide for the good woman who had hitherto had the care of his daughter. These advices left us no alternative ; and neither the youth, nor the beauty, nor the innocence of Sister Susan, nor her gentle, susceptible, and tender heart, capable of melting those even who were least inclined to compassion, could save her from the stroke of death. But as we have adopted all the sentiments of Madam Madin for this interesting creature, the regret which we feel in consequence of that event, is no less lively than that of her respectable protector.

THE END.

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